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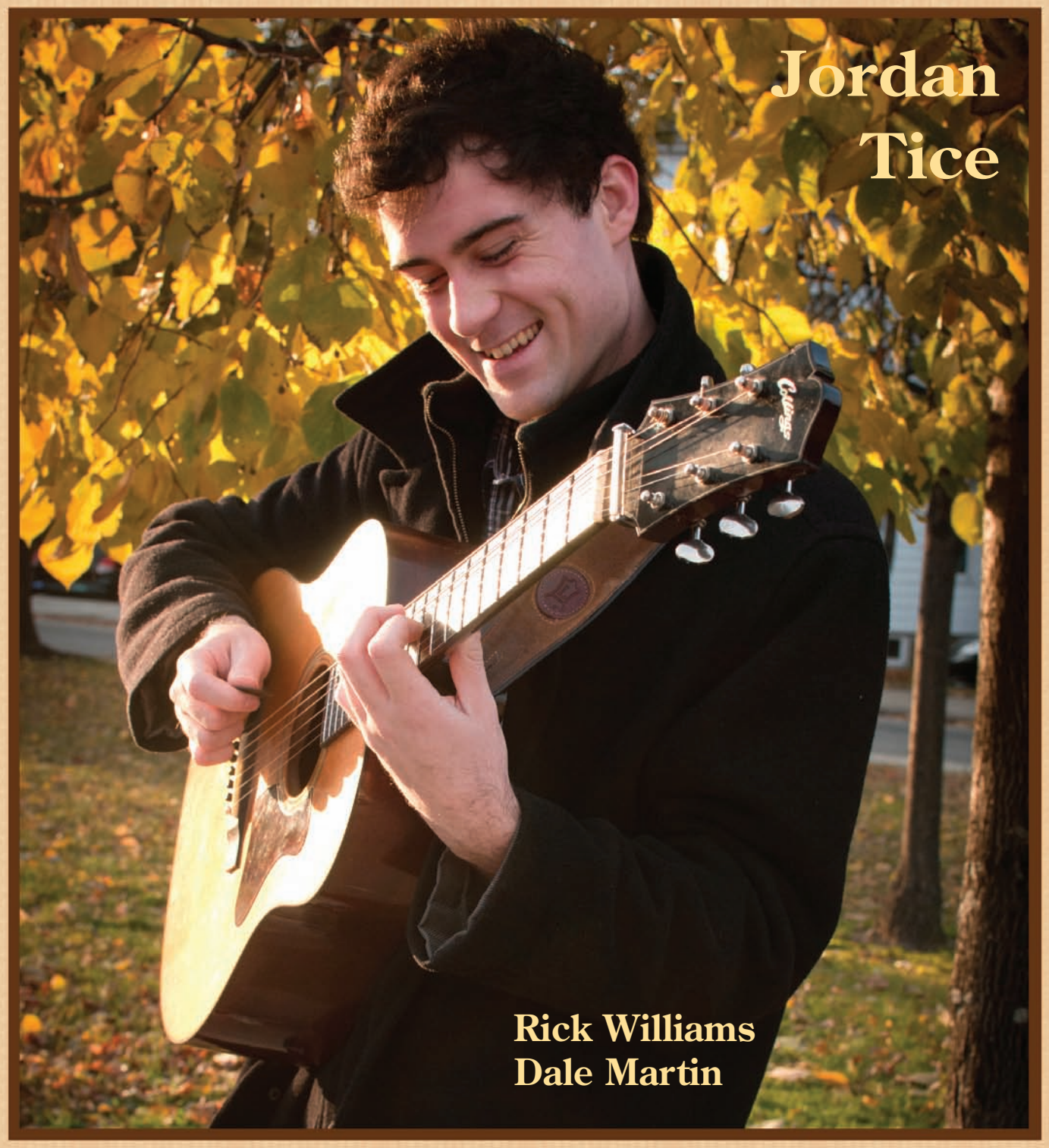
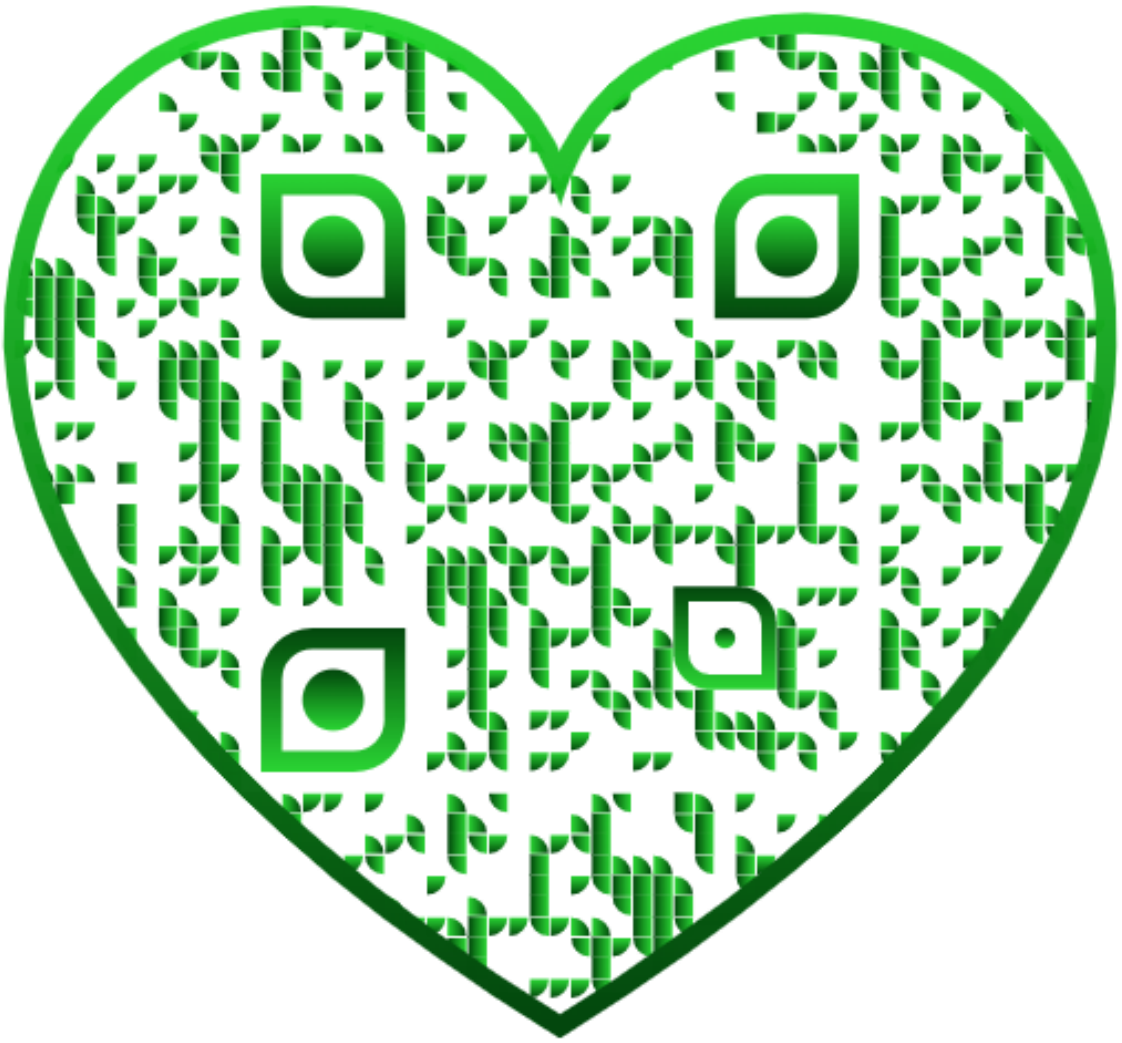
Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

Volume 15, Number 2 January/February 2011





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Flatpicking Essentials, Volume 6 is divided into two main sections. The first section is Part II of our study of improvisation. Volume 5 introduced readers to a step-by-step free-form improv study method that we continue here in Volume 6.

The second section of this book is focused on advanced flatpicking technique. We approached this topic by first having Tim May record "advanced level" improvisations for nineteen different flatpicking tunes. Tim selected the tunes and went into the studio with a list of techniques, like the use of triplets, natural and false harmonics, note bending, quoting, alternate tuning, syncopation, twin guitar, minor key tunes, hybrid picking, advanced crosspicking, string skipping, etc. There are a ton of absolutely awesome flatpicking arrangements by Tim May in this book, with explanations of each technique.

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Flatpicking Essentials, Volume 7 is a 170 page book, with 67 audio tracks, that will show you how to add texture, variety, and movement to your rhythm accompaniment in the context of playing bluegrass, fiddle tune music, folk music, acoustic rock, Western swing, big band swing, and jazz. The best part of this book is that it doesn't just present you with arrangements to memorize. It teaches you how you can create and execute your own accompaniment arrangements in a variety of musical styles. Don't rely on the arrangements of others, learn a straight-forward and gradual approach to designing your own rhythm accompaniment.

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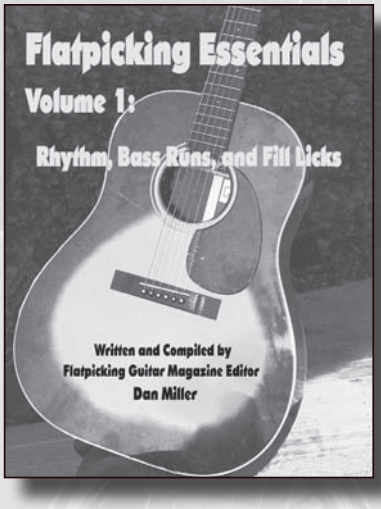

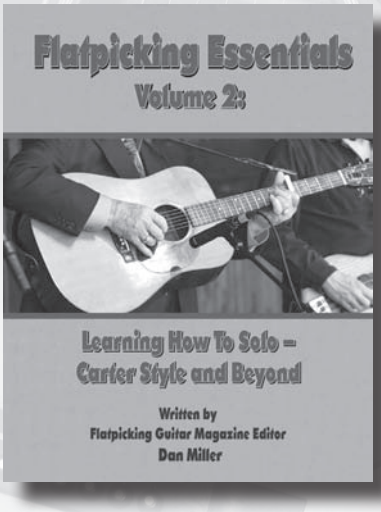

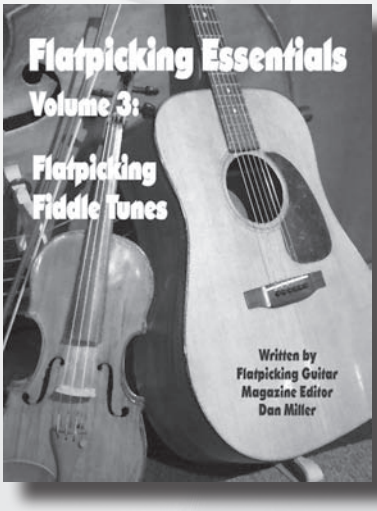

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Plans for the New Year

Welcome to 2011! This year, in addition to bringing you six more issues of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine,* we have a number of new instructional projects, CDs, and concert DVDs planned for release. In November 2010 Tim May and I shot three instructional DVDs that are companions to our flatpicking workshop series. The first covers flatpicking technique and mechanics, the second covers ideas relating to creating your own solos to both vocal songs and instrumental tunes, and the third is all about improvisation. We are also almost ready to publish a new book by Tim May that presents Irish and old-time fiddle tunes for guitar. Many of these tunes are in the repertoire of Tim and Gretchen May's band Plaidgrass. In addition to the instructional material with Tim May, we are also working to finish up a couple of very exciting instructional projects with our columnist John Carlini, as well as a new book by Robert Bowlin that covers the topic of solo flatpicking.

FGM Records also has a few projects that will be released in the first quarter of 2011. The first is a new CD by Mark Cosgrove. This is Mark's third FGM Records release and promises to be a great record. I am also working on a CD with my good friends Tim May and Brad Davis that should be ready for release in March. Additionally, a concert DVD featuring Robert Bowlin, Jack Lawrence, and Scott Nygaard will be released very soon.

Also, the special Fiddle Tune issue that we published a couple of years ago was so popular that we are going to publish Fiddle Tune issue number 2 for our March/April 2011 issue. So, you can look forward to another presentation of 20 fiddle tune jam session standards arranged by 20 different guest columnists.

Flatpicking Guitar Workshops in 2011

Tim May and I were very busy in 2010 traveling around the country teaching flatpicking guitar workshops. We had so much fun that we are not going to slow down at all in 2011. In January we will be conducting a series of workshops and concerts in Texas with our friend Brad Davis (Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston). In February Tim and I will be in southern California and then in March/April we will be in Virginia and North Carolina. We'd love to see you at one of the workshops! To check out the schedule visit http://www.flatpick.com/workshops.

If you are interested in hosting a workshop with Tim May and I in your area, please send me an email, we'd love to come out your way! Contact: dan@flatpick.com and please put "Flatpicking Workshop" in the subject line.

In addition to teaching workshops, I intend to be out on the road at festivals almost every month this year. If you are attending a local event, please stop by the vendor area to see if we are there. I'd love to shake your hand and say "hello"...and maybe we'll even have time to pick a few!

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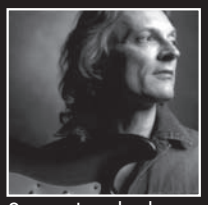
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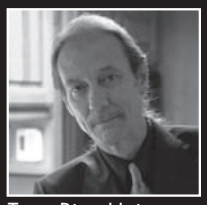
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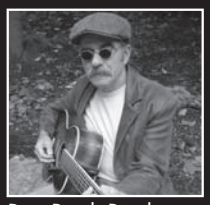
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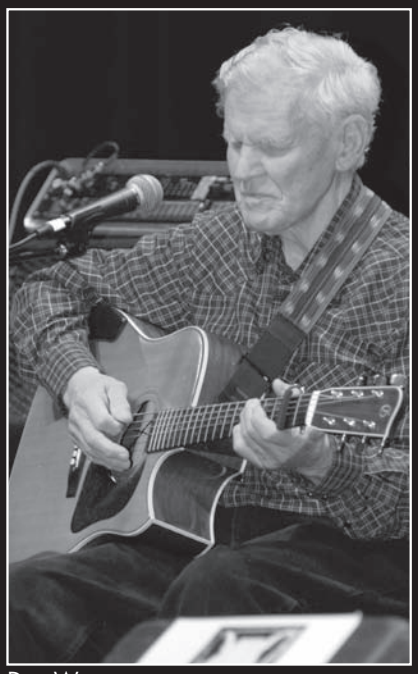
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Jordan Tice

The last time we featured Jordan Tice in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, in 2005, he had just released his first solo CD, *No Place Better.* That CD had been recorded starting in the Summer of 2004, just before Jordan started his senior year of high school. At that time I wrote, "His guitar playing speaks with a maturity well beyond his years." Since writing that article I have received two more Jordan Tice projects in the mail. The first, released in 2007, Jordan recorded in collaboration with his friends Wes Corbett (banjo) and Simon Chrisman (hammered dulcimer). The second was another solo CD, titled *Long Story*, which was released in late 2008. Both records demonstrated to me that Jordan's ability to compose, arrange, and record music had continued to mature. This is not a man who rests on his past achievements. He continues to propel himself forward and lay down these auditory time capsules that document the swift evolution of his abilities.

In our 2005 Jordan Tice article I reported that he had just entered college at Towson University and was studying music. After hearing the two CDs that Jordan produced while he was in college I decided that those recordings had earned him a place on our cover story list. However, before I decided to have his photo grace our cover I first wanted to wait to see what Jordan was going to do after college. Many guitar players who show a lot of promise at a young age will move away from music after they finish college and face the reality of making a living on their own. Before putting Jordan on the cover I wanted to see which way he would go.

This past September I ran into Mike Munford at the Four Corners Folk Festival in Pagosa Springs, Colorado. Mike had played the banjo on Jordan's first solo record and so I asked him if he knew what Jordan was up to these days. Mike told me that Jordan had not only stayed with music, but he was pursuing a career in music with great determination and passion. Jordan had moved from Maryland to Boston and had quickly become a big part of the strong Boston acoustic music scene. That information moved Jordan to the top of our cover story list.

by Dan Miller

When I interviewed Jordan for the first feature article in 2005 I found him to be an intelligent and introspective young man. His ability to communicate his thoughts about guitar playing was well above average for an eighteen year old. Now, at twenty-three, Jordan continues to be an impressive communicator. Four years of college will obviously increase anyone's knowledge and add a bit of the wisdom gained through life experience. I found this to be true in Jordan's case. However, he is not one of those college grads who comes out thinking that they now know it all. He impressed me as someone who is very knowledgeable and confident, but not at all cocky. He knows where he wants to go, but he is not so headstrong as to be inflexible. He is a self-motivator with determination and drive, but he moves forward with humility. The

music that he writes reflects his personality. He plays with strength and authority, but he does so tastefully. He is not a "hot-lick player." His compositions are as much about featuring the other members of the band as they are about highlighting his own abilities. The arrangements are designed to be best for the song, not to simply feature Jordan's guitar playing skills. His guitar still speaks with maturity well beyond his years.

While he was in college at Towson University Jordan majored in music composition and the CDs that he released while he was in college reflect the influence of those courses. The CD he recorded while still in high school displayed that Jordan had a natural talent for composing music. His years studying in college helped him add a great deal of depth to his natural abilities. While he was in college Jordan studied a variety of composition styles and techniques and learned a lot about orchestration. He learned how to write for a variety of ensembles—like string quartets and jazz bands—which taught him how to not just focus on the guitar when he is writing music. He said, "I learned to pride clarity and cohesiveness in writing music and that all elements presented in a given piece should work towards some kind of unified statement."

Jordan's second CD—his collaboration with Wes Corbett and Simon Chrisman—provided an opportunity for him to put some of his new-found knowledge to practical use. However, more than a highly arranged and rehearsed recording session, Jordan calls the CD a "conversational collaboration." The three musicians each brought three original tunes into the studio and "just went in and played." Jordan said, "It was very low pressure" and the trio described the process as "a documented and arranged jam session." The CD has been described as "a rare, heady concoction of creative wizardry and instrumental mastery. Times three."

Wes Corbett, on banjo, has performed with Crooked Still, The David Grisman Quintent, Tristan and Tashina Clarridge, Old School Freight Train, and the Biscuit Burners. Simon Chrisman is a virtuoso hammered dulcimer player whose approach to that instrument has earned him a great deal of recognition in the acoustic music community. The pairing of the acoustic guitar, five-string banjo, and the hammered dulcimer provides an interesting and intriguing musical mix. Musical creativity is abundant on this recording.

Some musicians think that too much schooling and "book learning" can actually harm their music. There is a fear among many natural writers and performers that knowing "too much theory" will ruin their creativity, originality, and style. When asked how the knowledge that he gained in school has affected his ability to compose Jordan said, "When writing I try not to think too hard about what the things I write are in theory terms. I try to just let one thing lead to another in a way that I have a visceral attachment to with the hopes that maybe someone else will find some significance in it too. I think the most important inner voice that a writer should follow is that same voice that says 'Oh, I like that' when listening to music. You should make decisions based on what moves you and makes sense to you. In regards to the music I'm making now being more complex, I think that it's just a side effect of absorbing different influences and also having more experience delving into my own writing process. Complexity isn't ever anything to strive for in and of itself but if you're writing and you're inspired to make something that's more demanding, go for it."

Jordan believes that the theory he learned in school didn't take anything away from his natural ability to create. Instead it helped him build a larger "tool box" of ideas and techniques to work with when composing. He said, "I feel like everyone has core musical values that dictate how they confront music from the beginning of their musical lives to the end. However, people change the things they work with and add new skills and influences. The regimented approach to writing and music making I encountered in school helped me build my awareness of the directions music can go. It also helped me gain control of my creative process."

Part of building an "awareness of the directions music can go" includes a consideration of all of the instruments in the ensemble. When asked about the tunes that he composed for his second recording, *Long Story*, Jordan said, "I wrote many of these melodies with other instruments in mind. One thing that ties most of the music I love together is that the elements that make up the music are veiled behind the flow of the music. My goal was to make a record with a bluegrass band that accomplishes this rather than to highlight the guitar and ignore the abundance of textures and sounds the bluegrass band is capable of producing."

The bluegrass band that Jordan assembled for *Long Story* is one that is indeed capable of producing those abundant textures. On this record Noam Pikelny adds his banjo talents, Casey Driessen plays the fiddle, Andy Hall performs on Dobro, and Mark Schatz pulls it all together on bass. Additionally, Mark MacGlashan plays mandolin on one cut. The CD is a combination of great songwriting and individual performance. The musicians

photo by Tom Mindte

Jordan Tice in the recording studio with the musicians who helped him record *Long Story*: (right to left) Mark Schatz, Casey Driessen, Jordan Tice, Andy Hall, Noam Pikelny

photo by Maria Camillo

Jordan Tice and Paul Kowert

maintain an incredible groove throughout the entire recording. In the liner notes Chris Eldridge writes, "…what really moves us is the band's willingness to play with delicacy and restraint." All of these phenomenal musicians have the ability to play "hot," but instead focus on groove and feeling, making it a wonderful listening experience.

By the time Jordan's second solo CD came out he had nearly finished his study at Towson University. When asked if he approached song composition differently for the second recording, Jordan said, "It was the same fundamental approach in that they are fiddle tune and jazz style melodies that are passed around among the musicians on the recording. However, for the second record I took more care in fleshing out the arrangements and I maintained a larger concern for coherence overall."

Jordan's newly acquired skills informed his ability to compose tunes to the degree that it inspired Chris Eldridge to also write, "Good pickers are a dime a dozen, but a great writer is a rare find. I think Jordan Tice is a great writer. He's always had a really creative sense of melody in his playing. But to be a good writer, it's not enough to have inspired melodies running around in your head—you also have to find the discipline and focus to form those ideas into a complete musical statement. At 21 years old Jordan is now releasing his second album of original music, a collection that establishes him as a musician at home with both inspiration and craft."

Chris Eldridge also writes, "the arrangements on *Long Story* are gently pointing the conventions of bluegrass into territory that we might just call 'music in general'." Having grown up with a guitar teacher who taught him rock and roll and jazz and parents who played traditional acoustic music, Jordan has always been exposed to a wide variety of music. His first solo CD included fiddle tunes, bluegrass, Celtic music, new acoustic music, jazz, and old-time music. In his second CD he includes all of these influences, but does so such a way that each song draws something from the musical mix. Jordan's web site says "As a tireless, broad-minded listener Jordan's interests range from Swedish fiddle music to rap, Be-bop to Bartok, Beethoven to Bulgarian. He distills what he likes from each and it becomes part of his own music." This distillation is evident on the tracks of *Long Story*.

During the years that Jordan was in college he continued to perform with a few local bands and he saved his money. Early in 2010 he had saved enough to make a move to Boston. When asked, "Why Boston?" Jordan said, "There is a thriving acoustic music scene here. So, I decided to move to Boston for the opportunity to regularly be inspired by so many people I respect and enjoy hanging out with and making music with." The music scene in Boston has provided Jordan with the opportunity to continue to explore a variety of musical forms. Since landing in Boston Jordan has spent time performing with violinist and singer Lily Henley, who plays a wide range of music from Celtic, to Ladino, to Hebrew folks songs; Brittany Haas, a fiddler who is a member of the Boston-based alternative bluegrass band Crooked Still and former member of Darol Anger's Republic of Strings; and Dan Trueman, a Princeton professor who plays the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle. Additionally, Jordan is working on a new recording of original tunes with collaborators Paul Kowert (bass player with the Punch Brothers) and Simon Chrisman (hammered dulcimer).

In addition to performing and recording, Jordan also spends time teaching others how to play the guitar. When asked about the styles of music that he teaches his students, Jordan said, "It is all over the board… rock, country, jazz, classical, bluegrass…" When teaching Jordan's number one goal is to teach in a way that helps his students remain enthusiastic about the guitar. He said, "The students that excel are the ones who love what they are doing, so I want to teach them how to play something that they have a connection with and that feels real to them." Jordan will have each new student identify what they want to sound like and then he helps provide the technical guidance to bring the student to the next level of playing.

When asked what direction he wants to take his own playing in order to bring it to the next level, Jordan said, "I am working to provide more color and texture to my playing. In the flatpicking world you have this single string thing, which is great, but I want to make my playing more colorful and lush…more piano-like. If you listen to someone like David Grier play you can hear that he knows how to provide a variation in texture. There is both an innate fullness and drive to his playing."

When asked about what he is doing to add a degree of fullness to his playing, Jordan said, "Part of it is learning how to fill out what I'm playing with other notes that are accessible. However, making a full sound doesn't always mean that you are playing more notes. Being aware of the space around what you are playing and how it sits with whatever else is going on can also provide that sense of fullness. If you play a few single notes and then play a chord, that chord, in relation to those single notes, sounds very full. If you have an awareness of what you are doing relative to what you've already done you can learn

how to provide a variation in texture and dynamic range that helps create fullness in the overall sound."

When he goes into the studio in early 2011 to record with Simon Chrisman and Paul Kowert, Jordan's goal is to "create something that is colorful, focused, and engaging." He said, "I am a fan of music that does something from start to finish in a constant stream of energy." When asked if the recording will be arranged or improvised, he said, "All of the parts will be worked out for the sake of focus. We will work out what we will play, the dynamics, the texture…it will all be well rehearsed before we record. I look at it as rehearsal for the sake of freedom because we will have mapped out an agreed trajectory that we can plug into and play."

When asked to comment about the direction of modern flatpicking, Jordan said, "Flatpicking is constantly evolving and so I recommend that students follow whatever interests them. Don't let the idea of being a 'flatpicker' restrict you to do the things that came before you. Follow the sounds that interest you. I think its important to genuinely be connected to the sounds you make. That's what will result in inspired practice" Jordan recommends, "I think its important to learn how to be creative with music despite the level you're at. Just sit down and write a tune! Use whatever you currently have in your tool box. It doesn't matter how much experience you have, you can write a tune with whatever technical skills you have right now. People have made beautiful statements in music with just a small amount of technical skill. The idea of being creative as something you need to work towards and earn is false."

Listening and feeling is a big part of writing. Jordan said, "Play a G chord. Listen carefully and then ask yourself what the sound of that G chord implies to you. Is it a color? A texture? A sound? Think about what it represents to you and then think about where it wants to go next. Then take it to that place and ask yourself the same questions again."

Many beginning to intermediate level students feel like the ability to write new tunes, or come up with original arrangements or improvisations of old tunes, are skills that are reserved for advanced players. Therefore, they wait until they feel like they are at an advanced level of skill before they begin to try to write, arrange, or improvise. Jordan's advice encourages students of all levels to begin to explore writing, arranging, and improvising. No matter what your current skill level, you can begin to explore these skills now with the tools that you have already developed. If you do, those skills will develop along with your ability to learn and memorize new tunes and techniques and will help your overall ability to play the guitar.

Today Jordan Tice is a good example of a musician who started composing his own music at a young age and has developed his writer's craft to a high degree in a relatively short amount of time. A composer of any age would be highly praised for the compositions that Jordan presented on *Long Story* at the age of twenty-one. With Jordan's passion for music and determination to continue learning and growing as a composer and musician, he will likely be someone who will bring enjoyment to music fans for many years to come.

Jordan continues to play the Collings CJ model guitar that he has owned since 2003. For this issue's audio CD Jordan has provided a cut from his *Long Story* CD. The song is titled "Coming to Life." This is a three part tune with an ABABC form. The arrangement on the CD as follows:

Intro- 0:00-0:21
Short Banjo Vamp- 0:22-0:26
A- 0:26-0:43 Guitar Melody
B- 0:43-1:03 Guitar Melody
A- 1:04-1:20 Fiddle Melody
B- 1:21-1:41 Fiddle Melody
C- 1:42-1:50 Guitar Melody
A- 1:51-2:07 Guitar Solo
B- 2:07-2:27 Dobro Solo
A- 2:28-2:44 Dobro Solo continued
B- 2:45-3:04 Banjo Solo
C- 3:05-3:13 Guitar and Banjo Unison
A- 3:14-3:30 Guitar Banjo and Fiddle Unison
B- 3:31-3:46 Guitar Banjo and Fiddle play melody/trade off melody
Coda-3:47-end

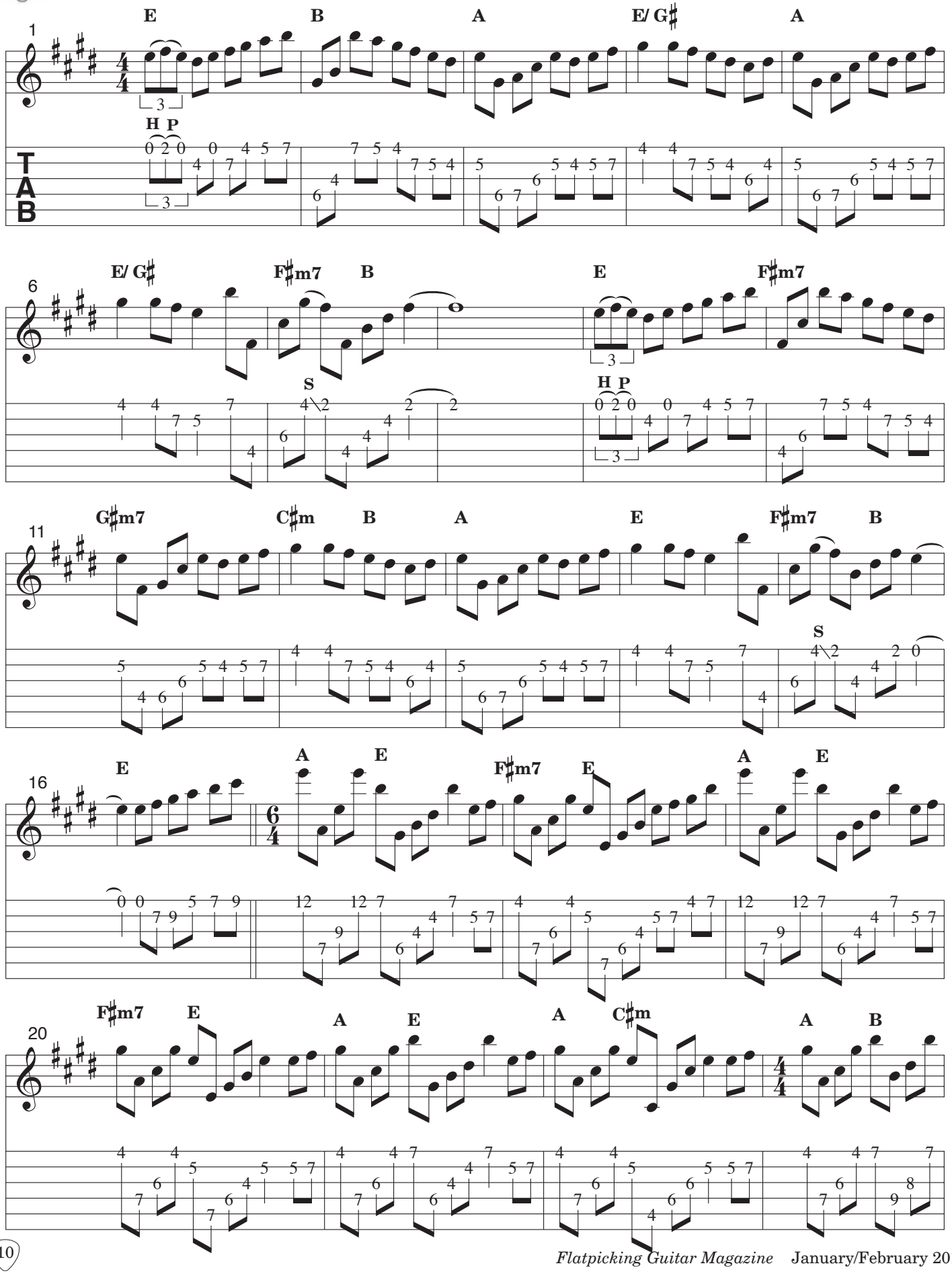
As you can see, the arrangement on the CD follows the form: ABABC, ABABC, AB_Coda. The first three sections of the transcription provided here follow the A, B, and C parts above that are notated as "Guitar Melody." Note that the A and B parts are 16 bars long, but the C part is only 8 bars long. After presenting the C part, our transcription presents the Coda. After the Coda, we have also included the A section that is notated above as "Guitar Solo." Have fun with this tune!

photo by Maria Camillo

Jordan performing with the Dan Trueman Brittany Haas Project: (left to right) Brittany Haas, Dan Trueman, Jordan Tice, Paul Kowert, Natalie Haas

Audio CD
Track 3

Coming to Life

Written by Jordan Tice

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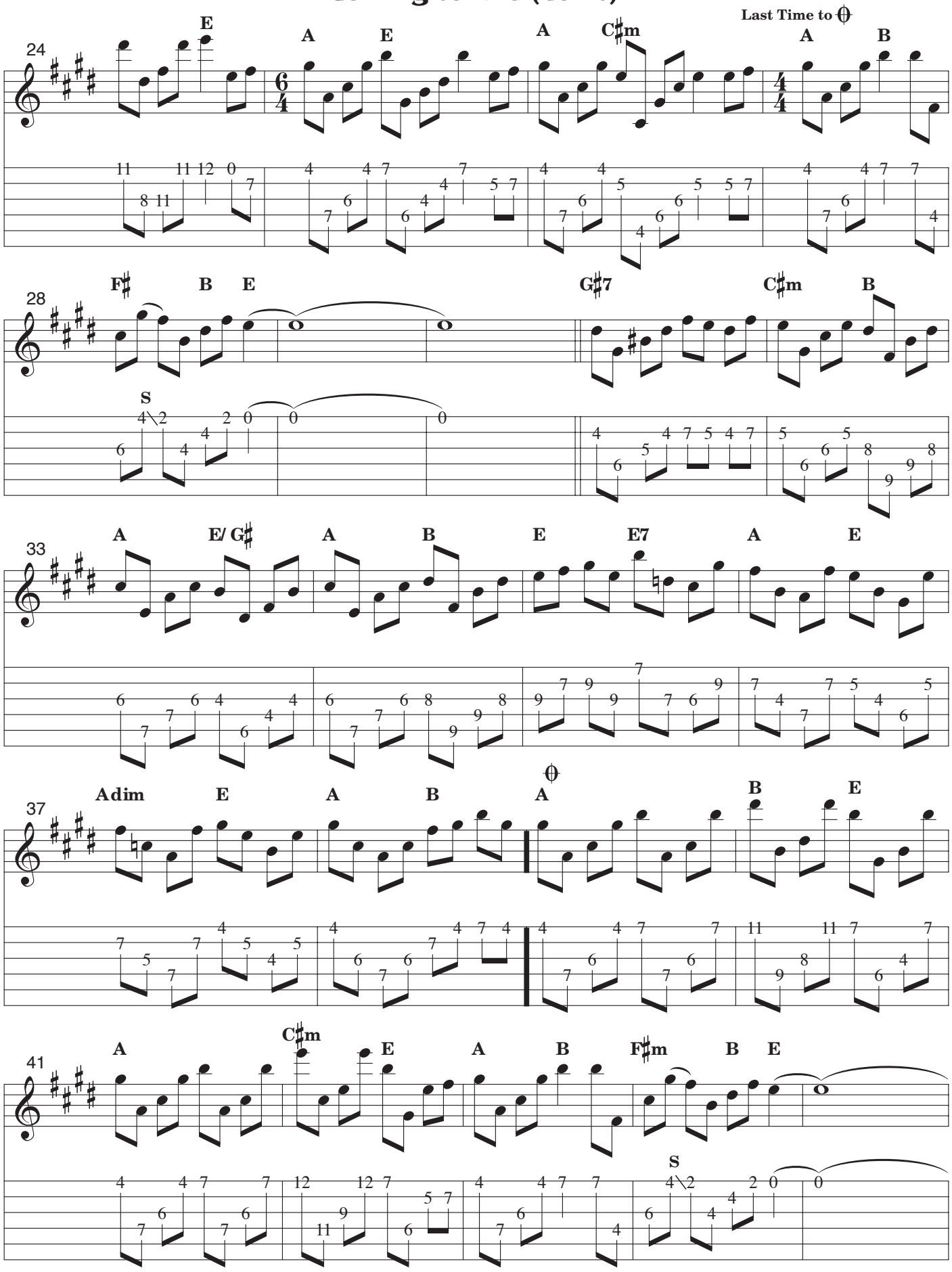
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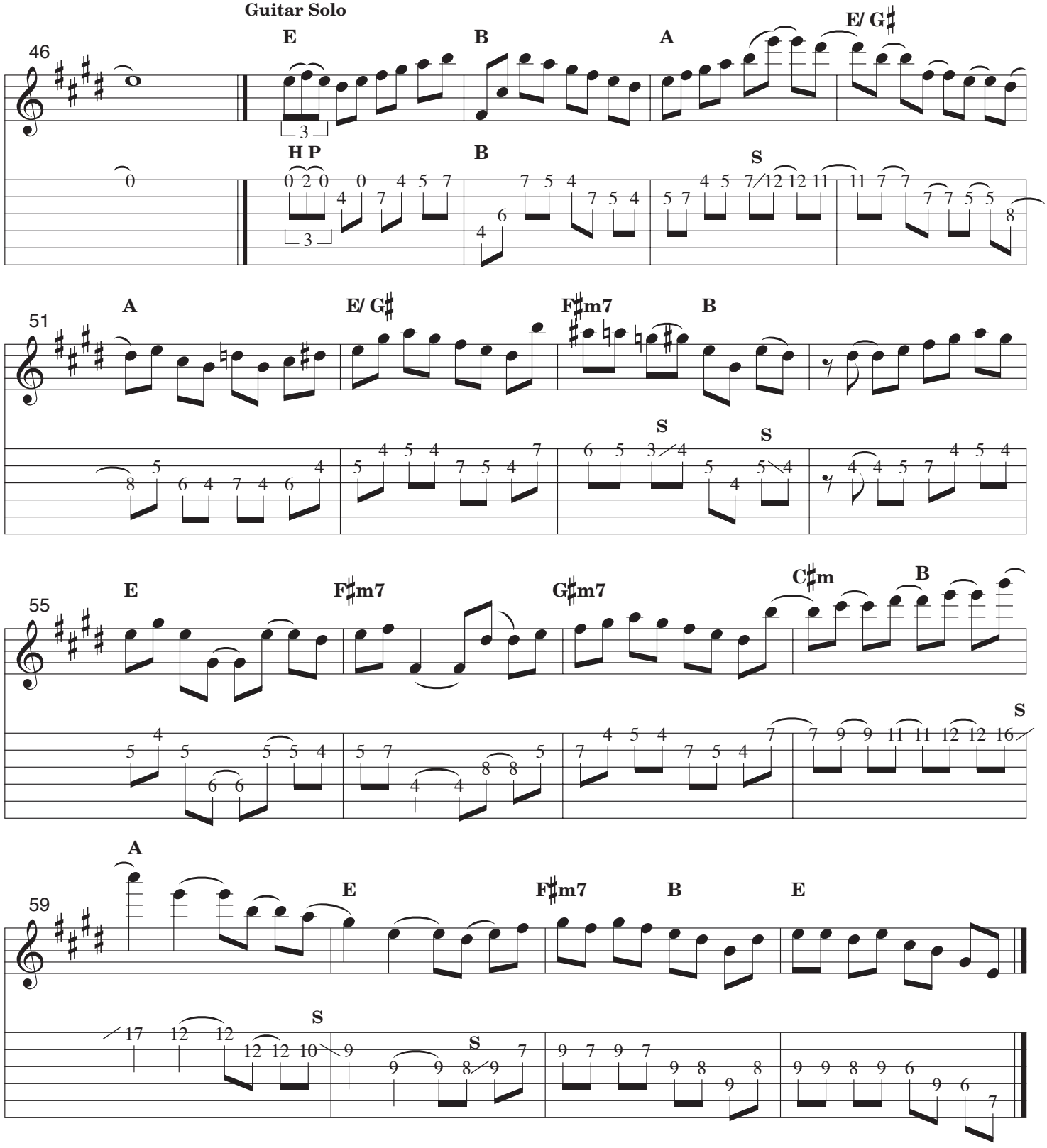
Bluegrass Rhythm Guitar

by Joe Carr

"Otter Nonsense" Rhythm

First, an explanation of the title. In the 1970s, David Grisman's music was being called dawg music. I decided I needed to claim a furry mammal to name my music —otter music. A dumb joke to be sure, but hey… it was the 70s.

A fascinating and odd occurrence is associated with this tune. When preparing to record this tune, Roland White asked me to record guitar rhythm so he could practice his mandolin solo. I put my portable tape recorder on a bed in our motel room and recorded the rhythm. It was very informal and I didn't even bother to turn off the television that was audible in the background.

Here are some things you need to know. First, the country singer Mac Davis had a hit song in the 70s with "I Believe in Music." Secondly, Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* band leader was trumpet player Doc Severinsen. Severinsen had a television commercial in those days where he played the first four bars of "I Believe in Music" on solo trumpet (in Bb) and then introduced himself and went on to sell whatever the commercial advertised.

OK … so when Roland and I listened back to the rhythm recording, we heard my rhythm guitar and Doc Serverinsen playing in perfect time and tuning along with my rhythm!! Realize that G minor is the relative minor of Bb and you see how amazing this was. After multiple listens, we agreed that Roland's solo should begin with this melody and that's what you hear on this issue's CD. On the original liner notes, I mentioned this was an obvious sign from the Great Otter and it could be no other way.

Here are some other things to note about the recording. Alan Munde's banjo solo has a chorus effect sound to it. After the original recording, Alan wanted to try one more time to get the solo better. He played so exactly the same and it sounded so good, we decided to use both tracks. The jazzy fiddle was played by Robert Bowlin. Bowlin is a talented multi-instrumentalist who may always be remembered as Bill Monroe's final fiddler. The mando cello on the introduction was an original Gibson generously loaned to me by Dr. Rick Davidson.

As you learn these chord shapes, be aware that I use my thumb extensively on the sixth string.

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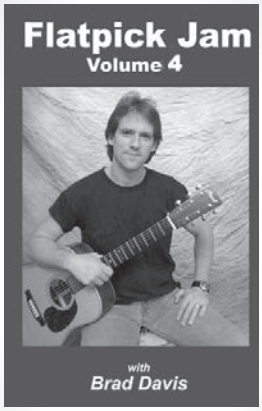

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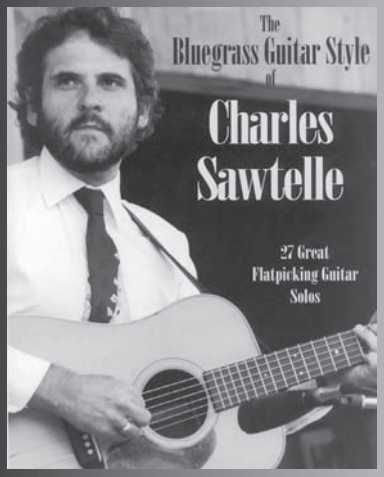

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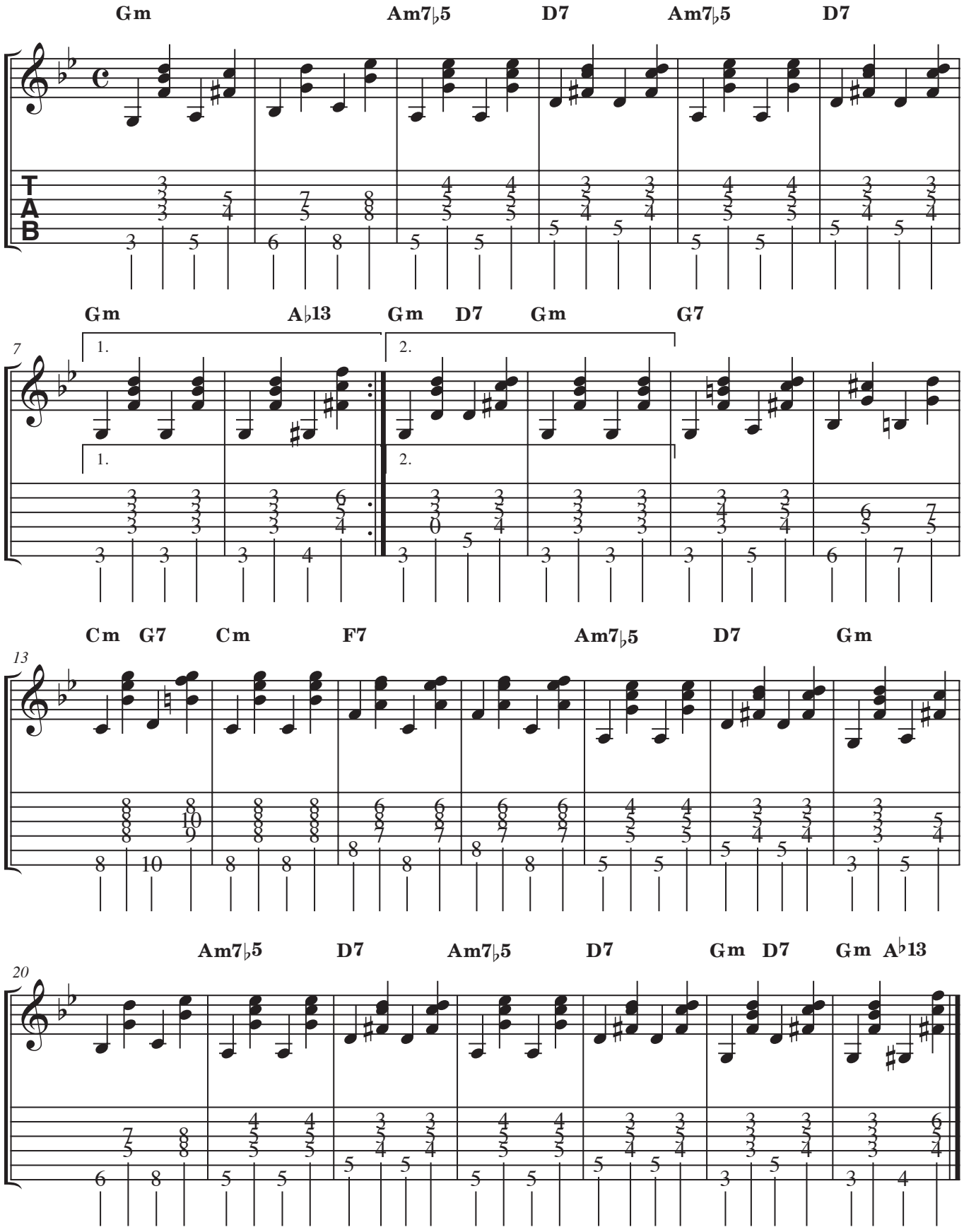
Audio CD
Tracks 4

"Otter Nonsense" Rhythm

Arranged by Joe Carr



Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

"Sugar Coated Love"

Here's another Bill Monroe classic that has also been recorded by Jimmy Martin, Ralph Stanley, J. D. Crowe, and Blueridge, to name a few. I chose this tune because it lends itself well to the structure of the bluegrass guitar solo, and because I thought you might have occasion to use it with your friends or your group.

Each time I prepare a vocal song like this, my intention is that it serves as a model to help you create solos to other songs that you'd like to learn. In other words, if you have some good examples, you will be encouraged to experiment.

When I create a solo, I consider the melody, some of the standard bluegrass licks, the chord progression, and I listen to recorded solos from the banjo, mandolin, Dobro, fiddle, and guitar. It's a process that has no guarantees and occasionally winds up in frustration (to be honest), but it's a process that you should not be reluctant to try.

"Sugar Coated Love" has one chord that's outside of the usual G, C, and D: it's A. When you have an A major chord in the key of G, I refer to it as "the Five of Five." I hope I've piqued your interest here. I'll explain. A is supposed to be a minor chord in the key of G. So it's kind of "incorrect" to have an A major in the key of G. Further, when we hear an A chord in the key of G it has a kind of "lifting" effect. It gives us the feeling that the song is sort of stepping up a notch. My way of justifying this musical phenomenon is by thinking of it as a key change.

OK, let me explain. If the song changes key from G to D, then A is the 5-chord in the key of D. Now we don't have to think of it as a mistake. It's not OK to have A major in the key of G, but it's OK to have A major in the key of D. Don't worry if that still sounds confusing. It's easier to understand in my DVD/download *Understanding the Formula of Music Makes It So Easy*.

If you'd like any personal assistance, give me a call toll free at Musicians-Workshop.com 800-543-6215. Good luck!

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(September 1996 to October 2008)

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Tracks 6-7

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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Indian Killed the Woodcock

Hi friends and here we are for another action-packed issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. I've chosen another great tune for you this month, "Indian Killed the Woodcock." When you learn this tune and play it slowly you will find it not too difficult. The difficulty lies in having proper technique that will allow you to play at about 228 bpm. So take your time and be aware of the "+" rule: all quarter notes hit with a down swing, eighth notes alternate, and all "+" beats are hit with an up swing.

Take a look at measure 1. The 1st string G note stays constant with the third finger fretting it while the 2nd string notes change. You also have two eighth notes slurred together in the middle of the four eighth notes making the right hand play DUxU D. This same action takes place in measure 5 as well. You will also find similar type play in "Temperance Reel," "Red-Haired Boy" and many other tunes.

Measures 8 and 9 also have this DUxU D right-hand work.

There are also several hammer-on/pull-off triplets to watch out for, as well as some fingering issues. When I play in the key of G, I generally set my left hand in second position. My first finger hits the 2nd frets; second finger hits the 3rd frets etc. You will find a few places where we have to shift back and forth between the G zone second position and regular first position.

Have fun with this great tune and play it pretty.

Bye for now,
Steve Kaufman
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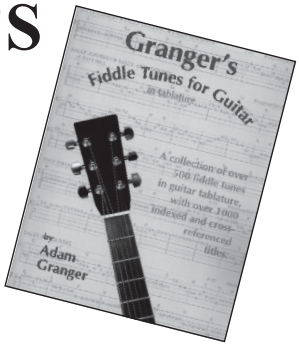
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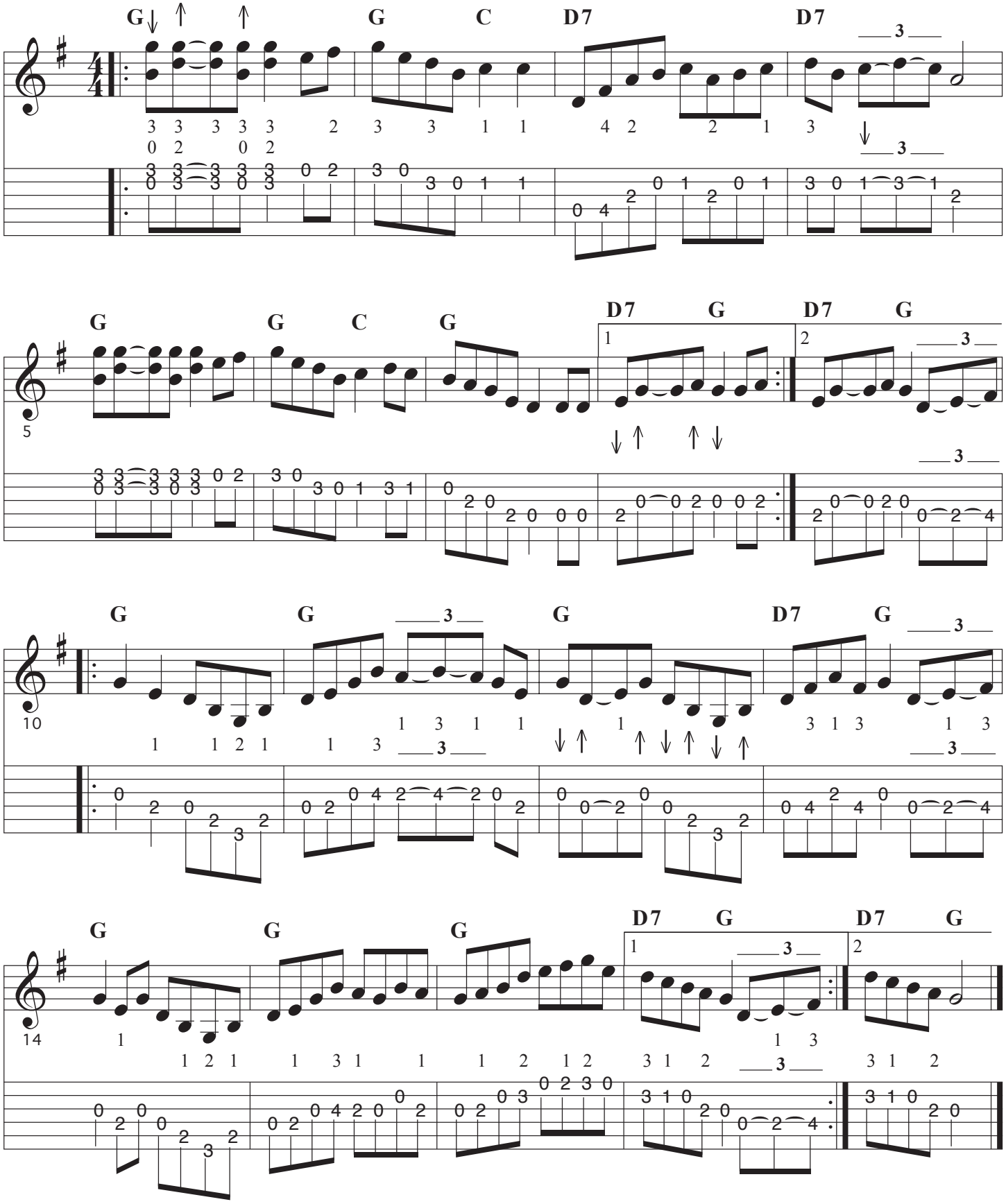
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Taking It To The Next Level: Your Chord Vocabulary

by John Carlini

"The world of harmony is a most gratifying place to dwell—there is nothing more satisfying than the wonderful audio pictures that gradually take shape by manipulating lines of voices within chordal structures."
Guitar Master George Van Eps

If I had to describe the musical path that I have been pursuing all my life, I could not choose better words than those.

It all started when I was about 7 years old. Under the brilliant tutelage of my teacher (who also happened to be my mom, Phyllis Carlini) I memorized the entire adagio movement of Beethoven's Sonata No. 14 in C# minor, more affectionately known as "The Moonlight Sonata". My memory of the process remains vivid; all those sounds, the beautiful and haunting chordal structures, the moving bass lines, arpeggios and unforgettable melody. I worked hard at it until I could play it from memory.

A few years later, a priest and family friend taught me some uke chords to the tune, "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie"! And I was off on a lifetime direction of dwelling in that "world of harmony"!

Which now leads me to this column…

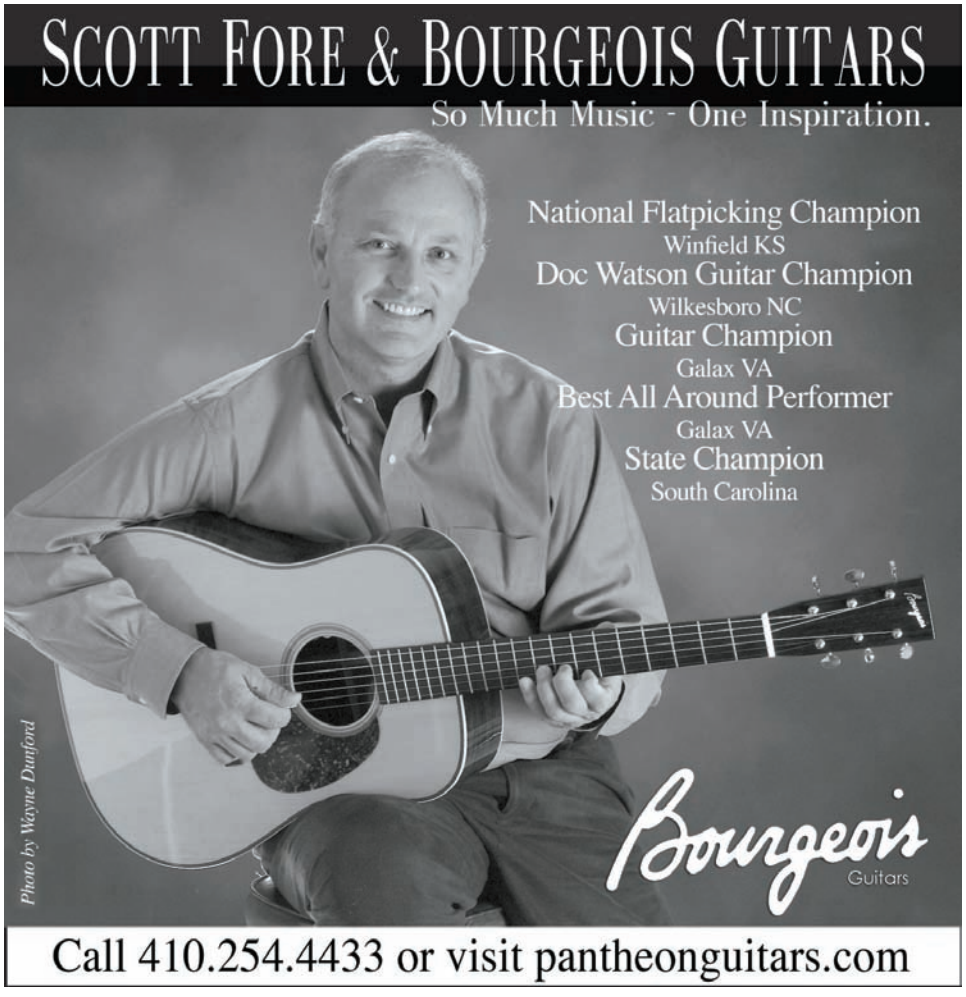
I get a lot of inquiries about what is called "chord melody" guitar playing. It's all about expanding your chord vocabulary just as reading and writing and speaking is about word vocabulary. Each note of a given melody is connected to the chord symbol notated above the staff. You may know, say, four or five C major chords that you could play for two bars of rhythm. Each one of those chords has a unique shape and sound connected to it. Then you choose the ones you want to use. Since you have already gone through the process of internalizing the chord, you don't even think about it. It's in your vocabulary. You just go for it.

But now looking at the tune melodically, a 2-bar phrase covered by that C chord may contain 6 or 7 notes. In order to play that melodic phrase in chords, note-for-note, you would have to know a C major chord that had each one of those notes as its highest voice. That's what chord melody playing is all about.

The chords I've provided here are just a tiny sampling of possibilities, a chordal box of chocolates! This is one way of playing a C major scale in chords. There is no rhyme or reason for why I chose these particular chords. They are just structures that a guitarist might use in a phrase. The more C chords you know that have a high note of D, the more interesting your chord melody playing would be. But, here's a starting point, anyway. I hope that it whets your appetite.

By the way, don't ask me to play the "Moonlight Sonata"! I forgot it many years ago. But it lives in my musical memory… indelibly…as do the wonderful influences that it (and my mom) taught me.

Please visit John's web site (www.johncarlini.com) to sign up for the latest performance and teaching info and acoustic music news. John is now giving live one-on-one lessons on guitar and 5-string banjo using Skype technology. More info is available on the web site.



Audio CD
Track 11

Chord-Melody Exercise

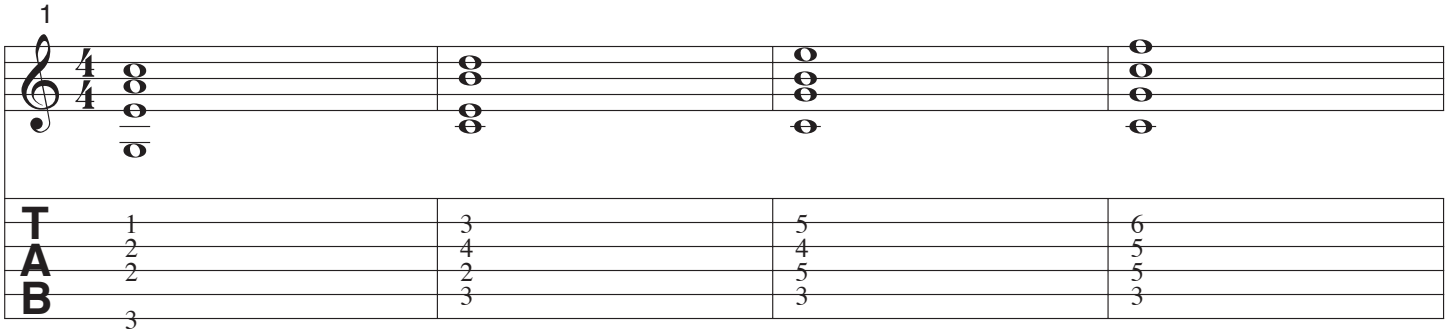
Arranged by John Carlini

C6 (C lead) — fingering: 4 2 3 1

CMaj9 (D lead) — 2 1 4 3

CMaj7 (E lead) — 3rd fret — 1 3 2 4

CMaj(sus4) (F lead) — 3rd fret — 1 3 3 4

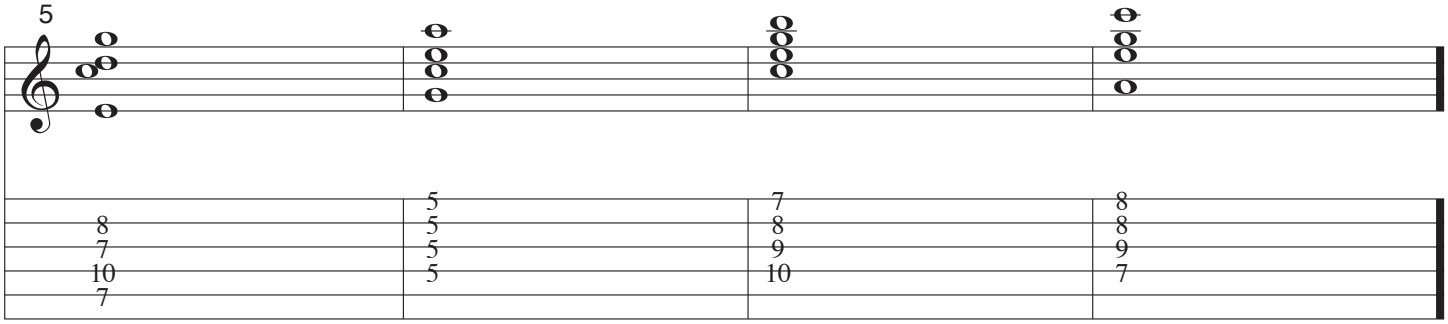


CMaj9 (G lead) — 7th fret — fingering: 1 4 1 2

C6 (A lead) — 5th fret — 1 1 1 1

CMaj7 (B lead) — 7th fret — 4 3 2 1

C6 (C lead) — 7th fret — 4 3 2 1



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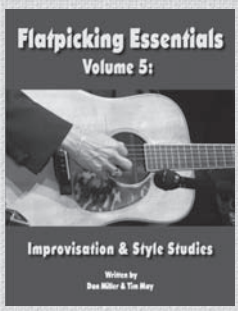

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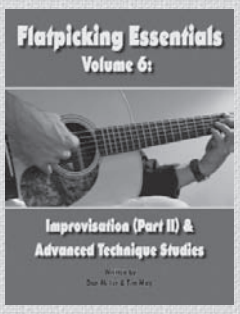
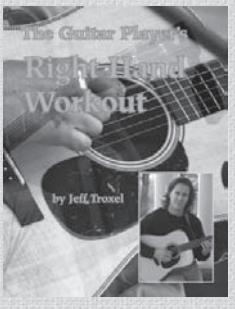
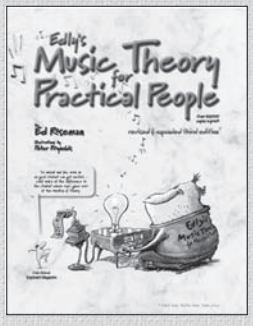


Flatpicking Essentials, Volume 6



Right Hand Workout



Music Theory

The Old Plectrosaurus by Dan Crary

There's a dinosaur that the late paleontology professor and science writer Stephen Jay Gould somehow missed. This fossil was actually discovered by my pal Harvey Reid (New England master of many instruments; you should hear him flatpick) who was making an ironic comment on me as a veteran guitar player who's been around forever. "Dan," he said, "you old Plectrosaurus, you." It was too good, the best jab I ever received. I must have laughed at it (and myself) for an hour.

OK, I have to face the reality that I've been at this a long time. But don't get me wrong, this is no time to start acting like a grown up or "mature," or any such thing. I'm still performing, got a new band with Steve Spurgin and Keith Little, and I'm generally rampaging around playing obscure old tunes on the guitar wherever I can. But I have to admit that I've been doing this for a long time because, as Norman (Blake) once observed, "we do it because we can."

There are some strange and hilariously funny things about longevity in music. One is the "Reverse Dorian Gray effect." Dorian Gray, you may recall, is the subject of an Oscar Wilde novel (recently a TV movie). In the story, he trades in his soul in order not to grow old, and his never-ending youthfulness lets him lead a life of debauchery and cruelty. But the downside of the bargain is that a portrait of himself that he keeps hidden in the attic does age and shows him for the decrepit and decaying monster he has become. Hilariously, a life of flatpicking is a little like this: you trade your sweet life for the allure of playing music, and hidden away on a shelf somewhere there are old pictures of yourself on those LP records you made back in 1982. But it's the reverse of Dorian Gray: if I look in the mirror I still look the same. But my old record cover pictures are getting younger and younger! Man, we looked like babies back then.

On the other hand, longevity in music does afford you some perspective. I have had the great good luck to witness and even participate in some developments that were not to be missed. When I started playing the guitar in 1952, very few folks played or taught the acoustic steel-string guitar seriously. There was Hank Snow and Don Reno and Mel Bay…and…and, well, actually, very few others. Acoustic guitars appeared widely as background rhythm instruments in country music, but in terms of lead playing and prominence in its own right, our instrument was one of the most obscure in America. Cut to the 21st century and the steel-string guitar has become the world instrument, found about everywhere on earth, and I got to watch that happen from the inside. Amazing. Thank you God and Jeannette and John, I have lived at the perfect moment in time. And remembering a world with very little guitar music makes you appreciate a world where there's a lot of it. It's a workshop point: a world with lots of guitar music and opportunities to play is a gift we should be grateful for. And we ought to work to be worthy of it. As I promised Dan Miller (our editor), Hell (in the Dantean sense) will be significantly less hot for those who help others learn guitar music. And *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* is a good example.

Another trend I got to witness: It may surprise some of our younger readers that as recently as the late 60's flatpicking was not a regular part of mainstream bluegrass music. Until then it had been the occasional "novelty" project: there was Don Reno

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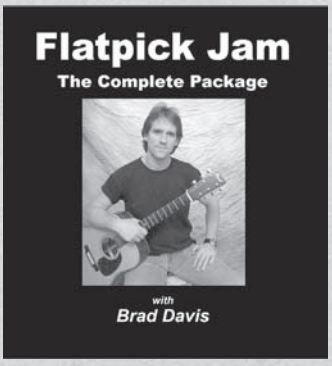

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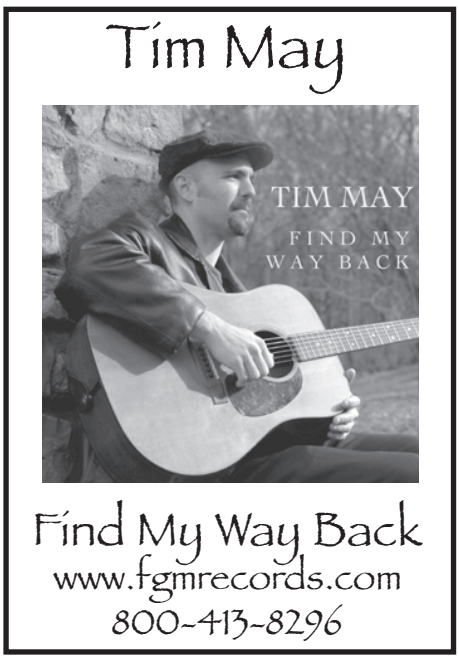
putting down the banjo to play a few tunes on the guitar. In the late 50s, George Shuffler and Bill Napier flatpicked with the Stanley Brothers when they recorded with only guitars and banjo. That's because – as Ralph once told me – Sid Nathan (president of King Records) liked bluegrass but he didn't like fiddle, mandolin and bass much. So the Stanleys called in a couple of flatpickers. In the sixties, Doc Watson made a phenomenal bluegrass instrumental record with Flatt & Scruggs. Out west Clarence White showed that flatpicking belonged in bluegrass as he worked with the Kentucky Colonels. But later, in 1969, when our band the Bluegrass Alliance played our first festival at Camp Springs, we were the only band there that featured guitar solos throughout the repertoire. It was even controversial that we did it. Today, most bands have a flatpicker, and these guys are good.

Then there are some trends that didn't happen, but I wish they would. I'd like to see more diversity in the kinds of music we play and the people who play it. And I'd like to see some more female flatpickers coming to prominence. The women players are out there—I've heard a few of them—but in general we're still too much a hairy-armed guy thing. Machismo has its place, but it can get monotonous. Flatpicking is a noble art with a sort of lowdown name, which could travel the world along with the guitar itself if we work to make it diverse and flexible and innovative.

Finally in the accompanying audio (track numbers 12 and 13), I touched on another trend I've picked up on: we're occasionally defaulting into sloppy rhythm playing. So I'm inviting us to be our own (friendly) critics, and once in a while reconnect to the basics. Sometimes in music, simple is more beautiful and powerful. So in today's audio, we go there in our rhythm playing. Mind you, it's not about rules: I think you should experiment with new rhythm ideas, and keep the best ones. But new rhythmic ideas are a limb out on which we sometimes crawl, and then before we fall off the beat and hurt ourselves, it gets to be time to creep back and reconnect to the center again.

I look forward to seeing some of you who follow this column at gigs in 2011, maybe at Marv's Music, maybe at Kamp, maybe Strawberry, maybe Winnipeg, maybe Winfield. It's going to be a good year, full of beautiful guitar sounds, the great licks, the beautiful, ironic, lonesome, flatted-thirds, git-tar moments that make an old song sing again, and makes us look forward to the next fifty years with the guitar.

When Jacques Cousteau was in his 70s, a reporter asked him what it was like, still to be studying the ocean and making films. He said, "Every morning I awake and see that I am alive, and I say 'It is a miracle' and I go to work." OK, flatpickers, let's get to it.



Sharpening the Axe
by Jeff Troxel

Chord Melody

In this edition I'd like to explore a concept called chord melody. This is when the melody of a song is played with chords underneath. I used this technique on "Away in a Manger" in the last issue and I'll continue the idea with an old standard fiddle tune "Arkansas Traveler."

One purpose of chord melody is to provide a sense of a tune in its entirety; that is, with the harmony and the melody sounding together to make a more complete version. It's a useful tool when first learning a song, or when teaching a song to someone else. It can also form the basis for a more complex solo arrangement of a song.

Here are some general guidelines to consider when working out a chord melody:

1) Bring out the melody note by rest-stroking through it and resting on the next adjacent string. If the melody is on the first string, you should still rest-stroke and play as if there was another string below.

2) Try to play a voicing for every new chord change, and place the chords on strong beats when possible. If the melody goes too low you can sometimes get away with not harmonizing it. In both the first and second endings I chose not to harmonize the C chord since it was sounding on the 5th string. But let your ears be your guide.

3) Use simple chords when possible, but don't be afraid to find notes on different strings if it makes the song sound better. One example is the D7 chord found in measures 4 and 13. I chose to use a D7 voicing in 3rd position since it was an easy grab and it gave me more notes of the chord than if I'd stayed in 1st position (this voicing is the same as a C7 chord moved up two frets).

4) When a melody note isn't part of the chord that's harmonizing it, try adding the melody note to a chord voicing you are familiar with. One example is the F chord in measure 12. The melody note is played with the fourth finger and is "added" to the familiar F voicing.

5) Let the chords ring out while the melody is moving above it. That usually means that some fingers will have to stay down on chord tones while other fingers play the melody. The pinky is a very useful finger in chord melody.

Listen to the audio example of "Arkansas Traveler" to get a sense of how it should sound before trying to learn it. Once you've mastered this version, try using the chord melody concept on other tunes you know. This is a great way to build your knowledge of the fingerboard. Good luck with this tune, and feel free to email me with questions. I'll catch you next time.

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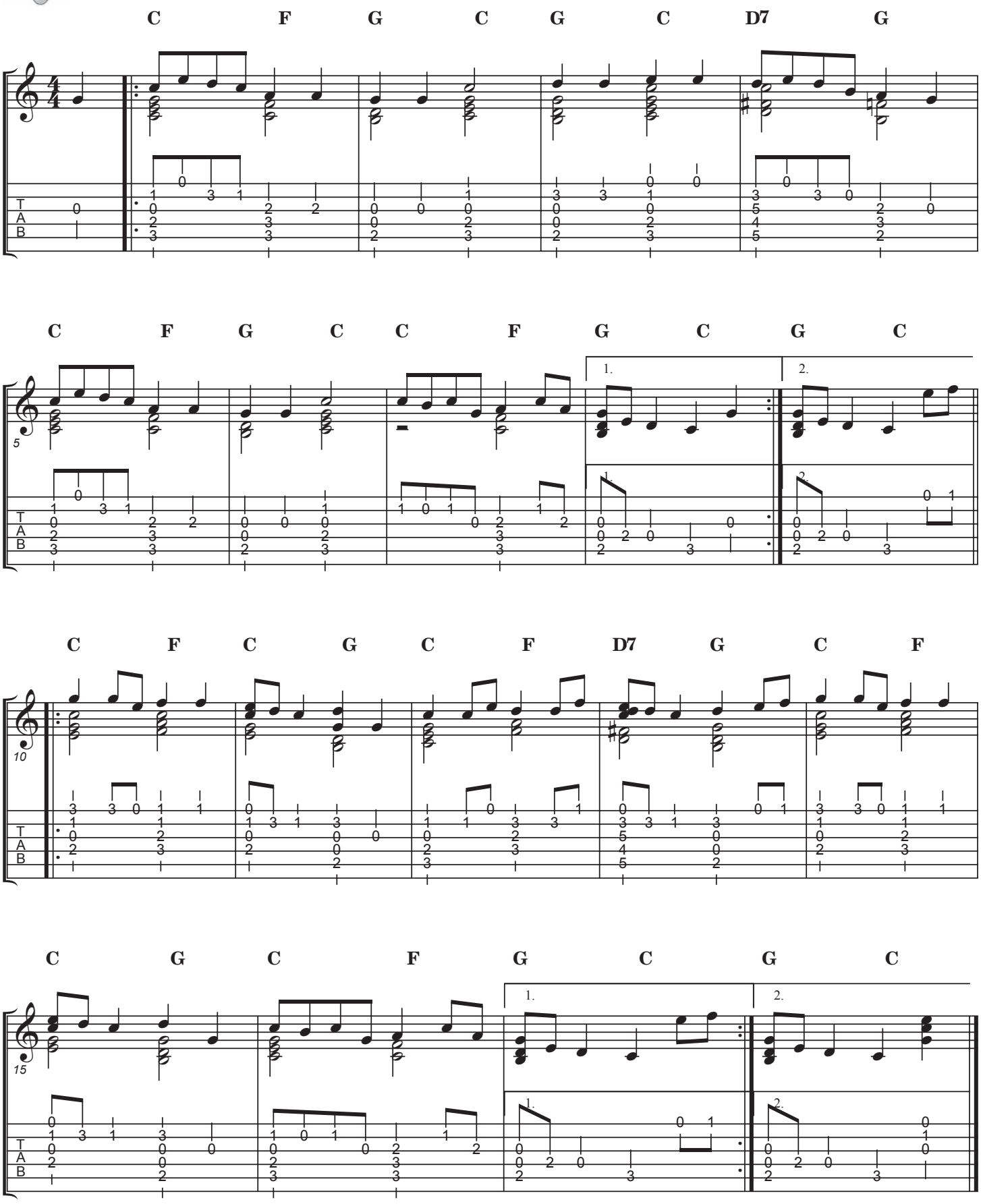
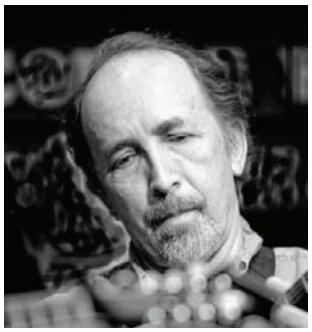
Arkansas Traveler

Audio CD
Track 14

Arranged by Jeff Troxel

Bluegrass Guitar

by Steve Pottier



Blue Ridge Cabin Home

This Flatt & Scruggs standard "Blue Ridge Cabin Home" is a song I hear in nearly every jam and is therefore a good candidate to have a break at the ready. This version features a strong double stop slide a la Doc Watson. Playing two strings at once gives you more volume, and in a jam setting volume is at a premium for the guitar player!

There is a banjoistic roll in the first change to D, followed by a fiddlistic/guitaristic fill. This fill doesn't stop at the usual end of the phrase but continues on to introduce the second part of the melody. The second part of the melody is similar to, but slightly different from the first statement of the melody, then goes into a definite banjo lick rip-off in the final D and G measures. Those banjo ideas down in the first position are a gold mine for guitar players. Dig out your Flatt & Scruggs and listen to Earl with a mind to learning some of his banjo stuff. Often you can use just the main idea stripped of the rolls to get a nice fat sound with some power and purpose.

Steve Pottier
stevepottier@comcast.net

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Audio CD
Tracks 15 & 16

Blueridge Cabin Home

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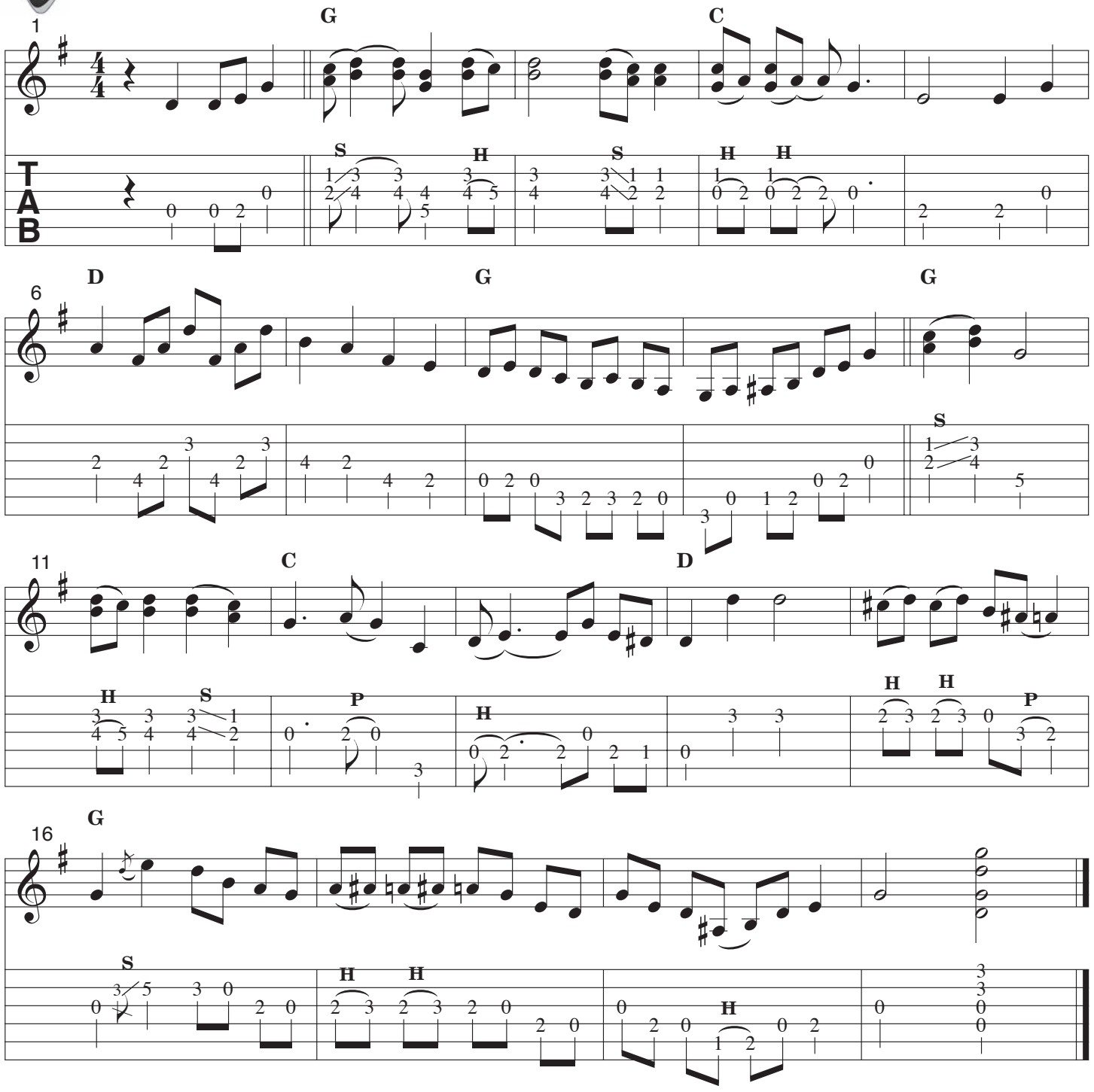
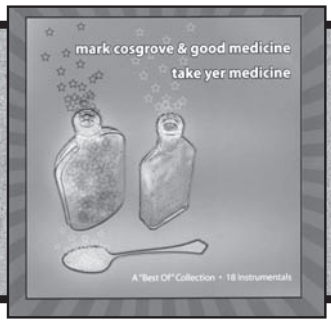

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"You've Been A Friend to Me"

by Kathy Barwick

For this issue I've chosen a good old Carter Family song to illustrate a technique that can be very useful when improvising a solo to a simple folk melody. The basic ideas are:

1. You're always playing out of a chord (or partial chord), finding the main melody notes in the chord, and the other "connecting" notes close by; and
2. You're always playing rhythm.

A third important concept is left-hand efficiency. Most of the three solos can be played holding a C, or part of a C chord down. What we'll get is a nice, relaxed-sounding Carter-ish approach that will plainly state the melody, and also provide a bit of "back-up" for the lead.

First, note that we're in the key of D. I'm playing with the capo on the 2nd fret, out of the open C chord. The first thing is to talk a little bit about how to hold your pick. Should be simple, right? It turns out that a simple little plectrum can be a very complicated thing. The focus for this lesson is how tightly to grip the thing. When you're playing a lick, or emphasizing a melody line (or even a single note) generally you get a pretty firm grip on the pick, and push the pick through the string. But for the technique I'm illustrating here, you want to "let go" of it just a bit. Release the pressure on the pick, retaining just enough to hold on to it. You should be able to waggle the tip of the pick back and forth.

Now, we'll play "rhythm" but just on two (or sometimes three) adjacent strings. The pick will flop back and forth. On the downstroke, the point of the pick (the corner that picks the string) will end up pointing up, at you, before you drag it over the two strings. On the upstroke, the angle will change, and the point will be aimed at the floor. By loosening your grip, you allow the pick to glide over the strings, instead of pushing through them.

Given that the "main" melody notes are always in a triad, you can use this technique —playing two and sometimes three notes in a chord—to find the melody as you play the rhythm, moving through the chord progression.

The first solo is just the basic melody. See how much of it you can play with your left-hand index finger holding the second string first fret down. You can leave your ring finger down much of the time as well. When playing in C, your left-hand middle finger will do a lot of work, fretting the 3rd and 4th strings on the 2nd fret, or alternatively leaving them open. It's good for hammer-ons and pull-offs as well.

The second solo is the "meat" of this lesson. I keep my right hand going—playing rhythm—all of the time, while simultaneously finding the melody in the chord. I choose a different set of 2 (or 3, sometimes) strings to strum on, depending on where the melody lives in the chord.

Try to play out of full or partial chords as much as possible. An exception to this could be the "turnaround" to the G chord at the end of the song, but even then I rarely would actually change to a G chord here. Staying in C usually works, as you can lift your middle finger to get the melody note. You can also just lift your left hand (as you have a G chord on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th strings, without fretting at all). At any rate, going to the full G chord involves a lot of left-hand motion that doesn't really provide any advantage.

In solo 2, listen closely to hear the "rhythm" playing that underlies the melody. I left the rhythm guitar out of this version so that you can hear the light strumming (rhythm playing, really) n between the melodic phrases. There are a number of notes that are artifacts of the right-hand strumming motion, as opposed to deliberately-played notes. Any time you see an eighth-note upstroke by itself (the last notes in measures 17, 21, and 25; second note of measures 18, 29 and 20, etc.), that's an indication that the note was hit on the upstroke of the strumming pattern.

In the third solo, I use the approach from the second solo as my "base" and depart periodically to play a lick or a run.

Most often when I learn a new song, I would approach it this way:

1. Listen to the song and learn the melody (that is, know how the song goes).
2. Figure out the chord progression
3. Find the melody in and around the chords. When you get better at this, try doing this part while playing the chords.
4. Play the melody with the rhythm approach as in the second solo here
5. Repeat step 4, gradually straying from the basic melody by adding melody fragments (scales), runs between melody fragments, and licks, first one at a time, then getting more adventurous.

By approaching a song in this way, I have created a solid understanding of the basic melody and where it lies in the chords. The simple melody is perfectly suitable as a solo; and it provides a familiar landing place to return to after venturing off the beaten path. In fact, the hard part of this sort of improvisation is getting back to familiar territory, so the more-familiar and simple your basic arrangement of the song, the easier this task will be.

Some notes on the tab:

Solo 1:

1. You should be fretting the 2nd string 1st fret C note almost all the time. In fact, you can play the entire first solo holding the two C notes (2nd and 5th strings) down for the entire song. Move your middle finger around to catch the other notes as needed. In M14 I move my ring ringer to the 6th string and use my pinky for the 5th string note.

Solo 2:

1. I still leave my index down on the 2nd string 1st fret all the time, except when in a G chord (M24; I put my index finger back down in the middle of M25).

2. In M20, the most efficient way to play this is to lift your middle finger, and use your pinky for the 4th string F note. Don't bother barring the first string; you won't be playing it.
3. At the end of M20 and in several other places, you'll need to work on lifting just your pinky, while leaving your ring finger down.
4. In M24, lift your fingers off the strings. However, there's no need to lay a G chord down.
5. At the end of M29, lift your ring and pinky fingers together, and move them over one string for the beginning of M30.
6. I play M31 out of the C chord, even though we're in G here.

Solo 3:
1. Again, start this holding a C chord (actually, I start it just with my index on the 2nd string C note). In fact, I leave my index finger on that note until M41, and could leave it down even then. It goes back down at beat 4 of M42.
2. In M47, move your ring finger over to get the 6th string note. Leave your other fingers in the C chord.
3. M48 should be played out the C chord, even though its in G.

Okay, that's it for this one! Try this technique on other songs. Let me know how it goes.

Kathy Barwick has played guitar since the late 1960s, when she learned folk-style fingerpicking. Kathy also plays banjo, resophonic guitar, and acoustic bass, and has performed over the years with various bluegrass bands. A founding member of The All Girl Boys, Kathy now plays resophonic guitar with Mountain Laurel, a bluegrass band based in the Grass Valley area of northern California (http://myspace.com/mountainlaurelgrassvalley). Kathy is the guitarist in an Irish band: Nine-8ths Irish (www.nine8thsirish.com). A Sacramento resident, Kathy teaches at music camps and gives private lessons on guitar, resophonic guitar, banjo, and bass. She welcomes your feedback and/or comments; you can contact her at kbarguitar@yahoo.com.

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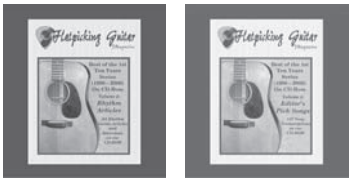
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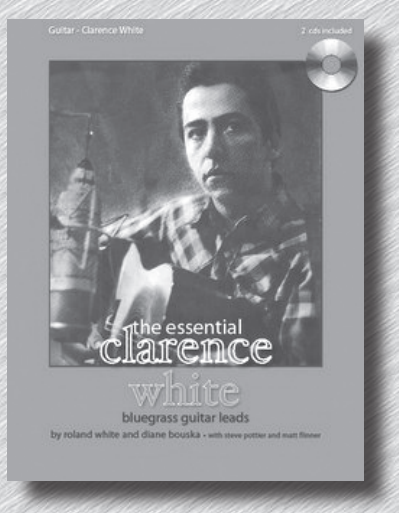

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You've Been A Friend to Me

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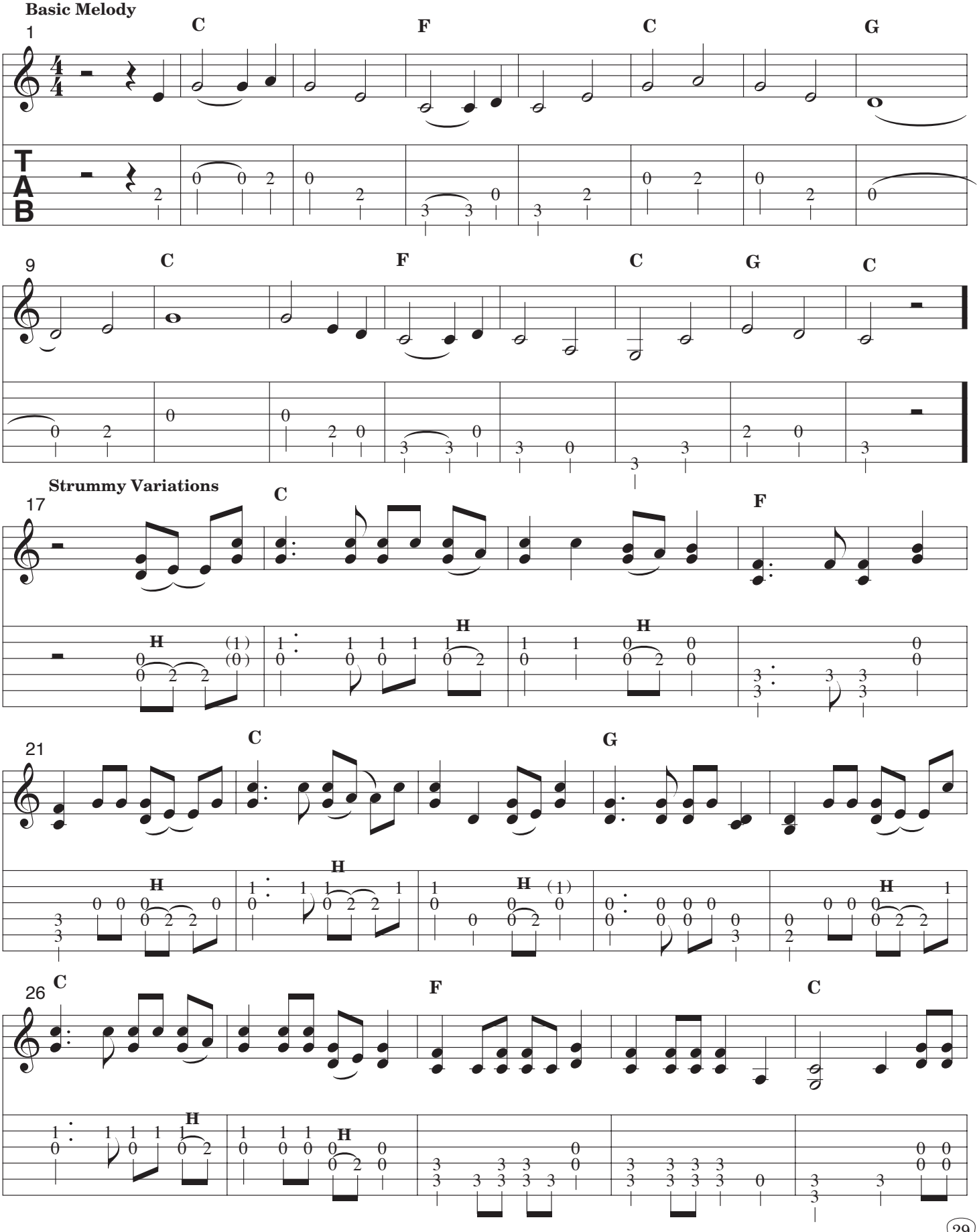
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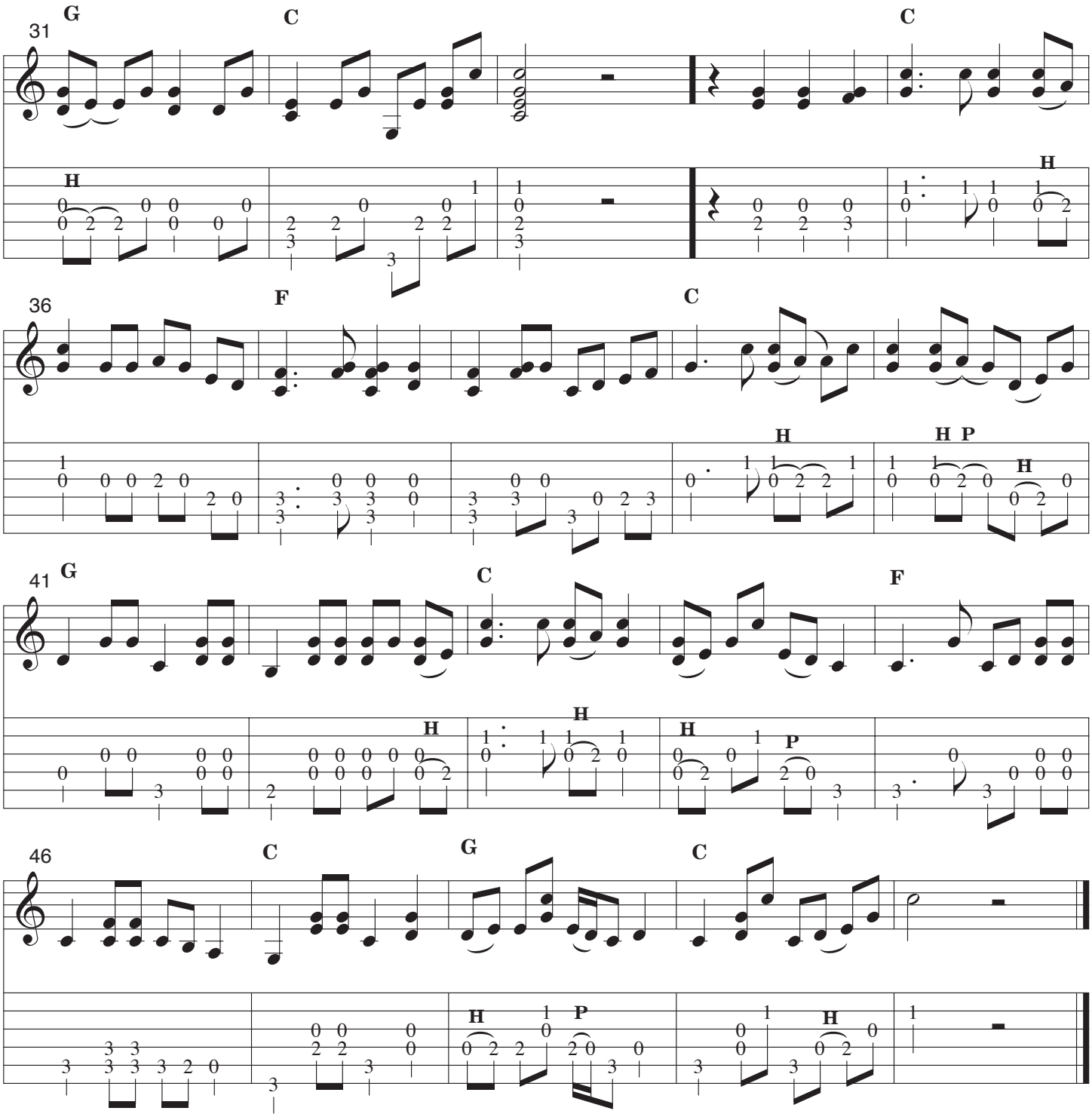
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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Return From Fingal

With the weather getting colder, the home-based flatpicker forages more intently for musical sustenance. And as he or she likely discovers, it's often a simple, slower melody that provides the most inner warmth—a melody like the haunting Irish march "Return From Fingal."

Slower tunes beckon you to dig in and pull as much tone as you can from each note. And since speed isn't really a factor you're free to play down strokes almost whenever you choose. (They tend to be more expressive.)

Since "Fingal"' is not a familiar flatpicking melody (and not everyone gets the audio CD for each issue) the first order of business is: get ye to *YouTube* and give this puppy a listen. (I particularly recommend the version by Lunasa. Note that they do it a half step up from its standard Em setting; you should've seen the grimaces that one time I launched into in it in Fm at a local session.) It's hard to play a tune with feeling until you've got the melody squarely in you head.

On the technical side there are two things worth noting about this arrangement. The first is that we are playing almost entirely in second position: your index handles the 2nd fret, your middle the 3rd, etc. The other is that the starting note (among others) is a grace note: a note which embellishes (or "graces") the note that it leads into. They can be hammers, slides or pull-offs—but they are much faster than the eighth-note-long embellishments that you are used to. Which is why they appear in tab and notation as smaller notes; they have no life apart from the notes that they are gracing; your pick strokes would be exactly the same if they were omitted.

Hopefully this melody will help warm you this winter. (The other thing you can do is: keep a blow dryer plugged in near your bed and give it a blast just before or as you are getting under the covers.)

Orrin Star (www.orrinstar.com) is an award-winning guitar, banjo, & mandolin player based in the Washington, DC area. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, is the author of Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar, and performs mostly solo and duo. He offers private music instruction both in person and online..

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Return From Fingal

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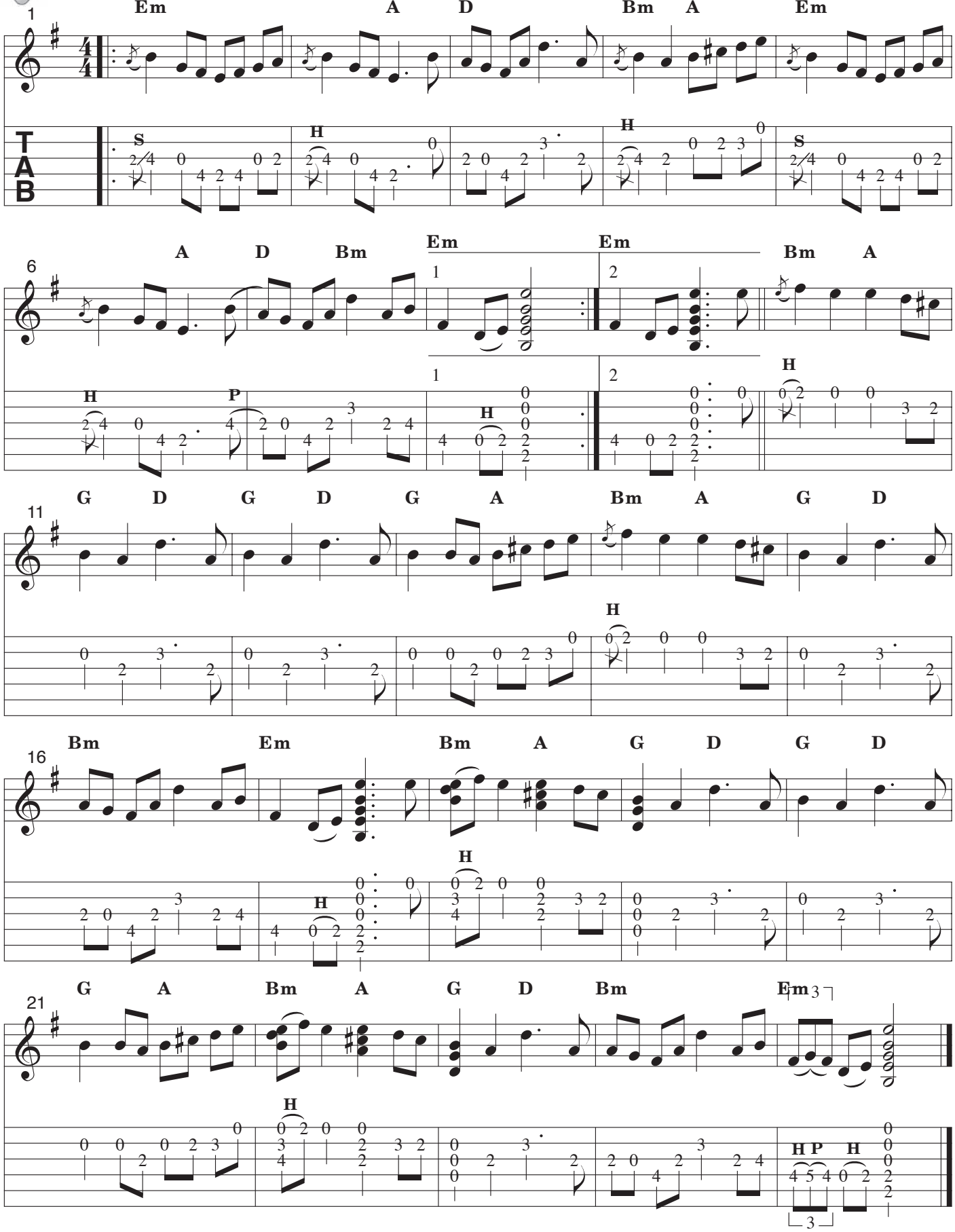

Minuet in G Major

by Dix Bruce

I don't know a lot about classical music, I have had no training in it, but I love the music of J.S. Bach. For thirty years or more I have tried to make sense of it in my own way on the guitar and mandolin. It's wonderfully rich music that I keep learning more about all the time.

I've especially enjoyed taking well-known Bach piano or orchestral pieces apart and re-arranging them for guitar and mandolin duets. Let's look at one in this column, a minuet from *The Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach*, which ol' J.S. put together to teach his wife keyboard and music skills.

I learned this from an old piano book, *Twenty Easy Pieces from the Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach*. The tune is identified as only "#4" and I'm sure it's identified differently elsewhere. The music is written in typical two-hand piano style with the left hand shown in the bass clef, the right hand shown in the treble.

I split the piano music into two guitar parts, the treble clef played mostly on the upper three strings, the bass clef mostly on the lower three strings. I didn't change very much though I moved a few notes up or down an octave here and there to get one part out of the other's way. I also simplified some of the markings from the original music. If you're curious you can consult the piano score.

I did leave in a lot of the dynamics: f = forte or loud, p = piano or soft, mf = mezzo forte or medium loud. You'll see them throughout the music. I also left in the crescendos and decrescendos. When you see a crescendo, which looks like a stretched out "greater than" symbol (<), you should gradually bring up the volume over the span of the symbol. Do the opposite with the decrescendos or stretched out "lesser than" symbol (>) and lower the volume. Forte and piano are, of course, subjective and relative terms. It's not so important that you set either at some specific point. It's more important that you change dynamically as indicated as you play through the minuet.

By the way, did you know that the instrument called the piano was originally called the pianoforte or "soft loud" because it had a greater volume and dynamic range than previous keyboards? Now you know!

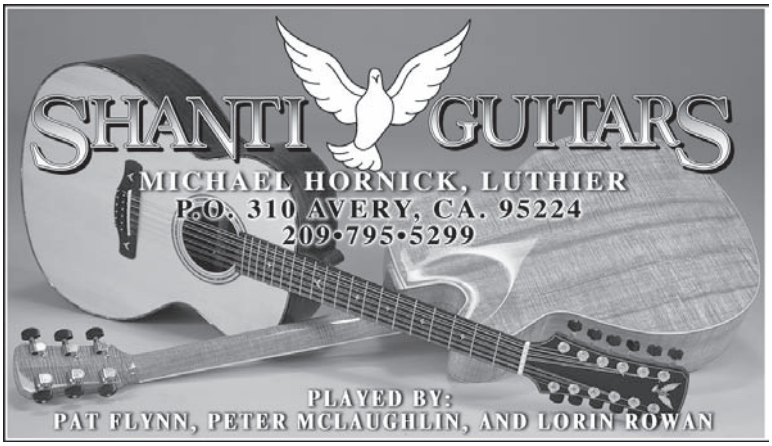
There's a poco rit in the last two measures. It stands for poco ritard which means to slow down slightly on the last time through. You can hear how I play it on the FGM CD.

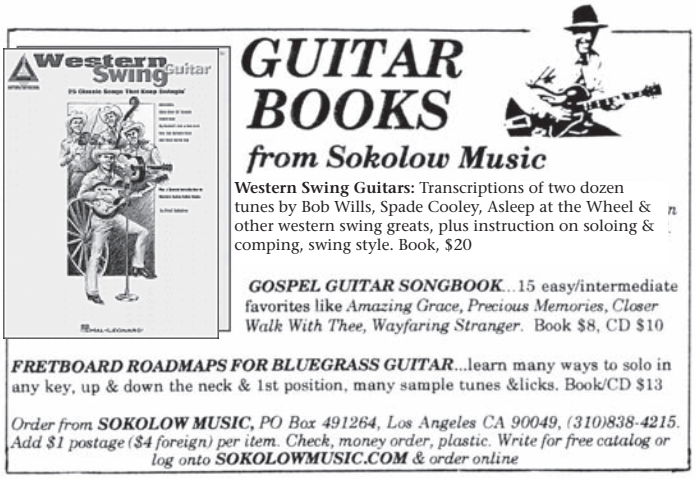
Otherwise the music and tab are about the same as any other piece of music you've seen in FGM. I did add a few of my usual fretting finger numbers between the standard notation and the tab.

The structure of the menuet is call and response and the two voices talk back and forth to one another as the music progresses. Be sure to try it with a duet partner.

In one of my last columns we looked at "rhythmizing" the melody to "(Back Home Again in) Indiana" to make it into a swing/jazz solo. I posted a video clip on YouTube of me playing it: www.youtube.com/user/dixbruce?feature=mhum#p/a/u/0/PcjLOo2rxyc.

Dix's latest book/CD sets are "Gypsy Swing & Hot Club Rhythm Vol. I & II" (separate editions for guitar & mandolin) "Christmas Favorites for Solo Guitar: Best Loved Traditional Songs for Bluegrass Guitar," and "The Parking Lot Picker's Songbook, Guitar Edition" with over 215 great bluegrass, old time, and gospel songs, with music, chords, TAB, lyrics and more, every song demonstrated on the two included CDs. www.musixnow.com. You can email Dix at: contact@musixnow.com.

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Minuet in G Major

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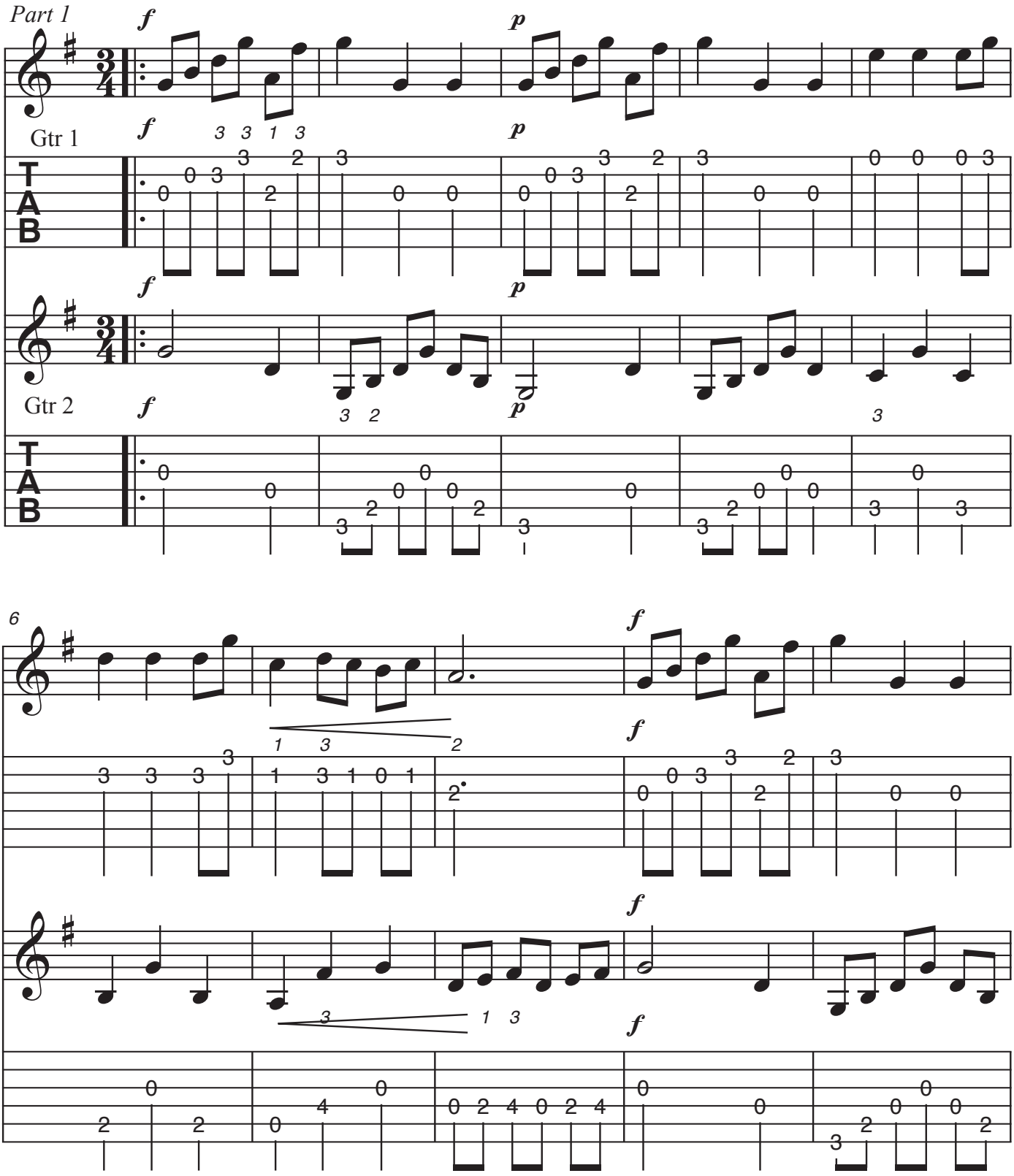
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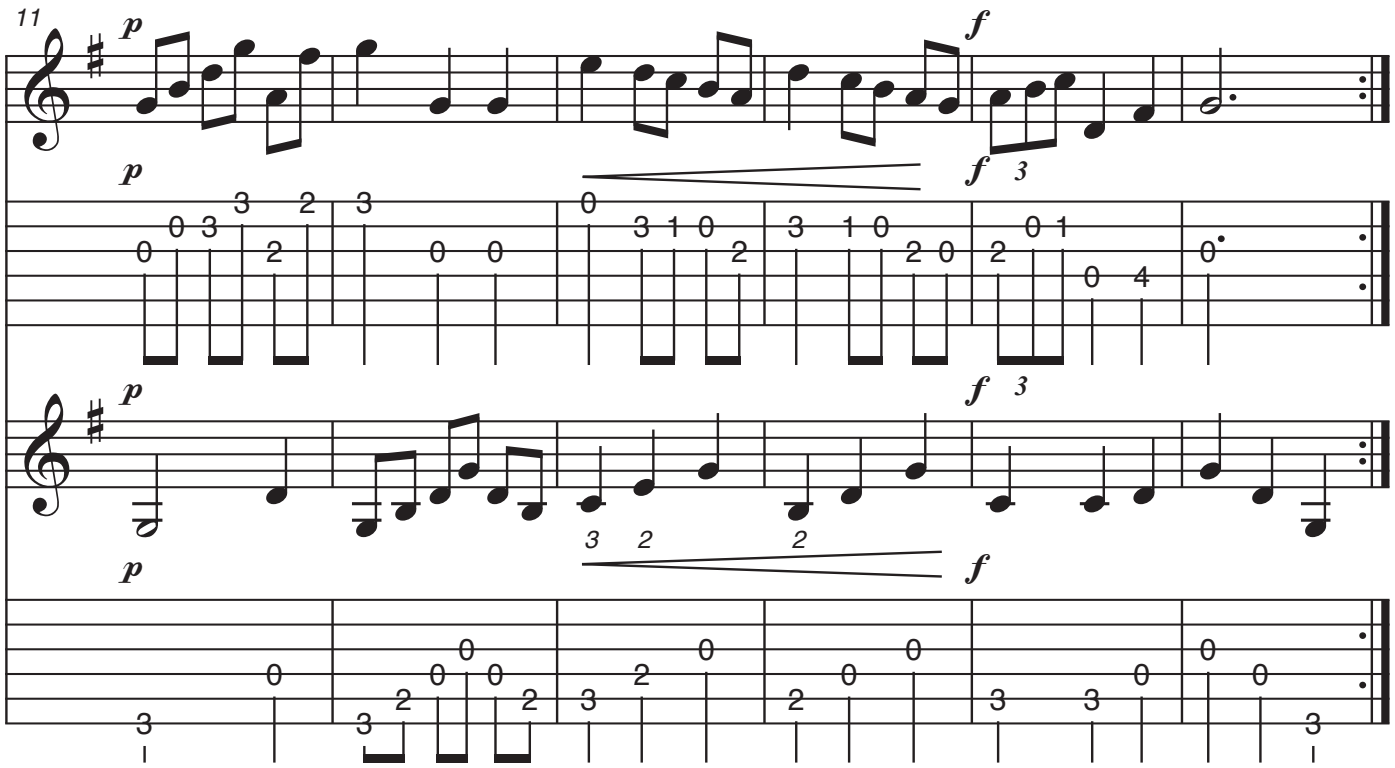
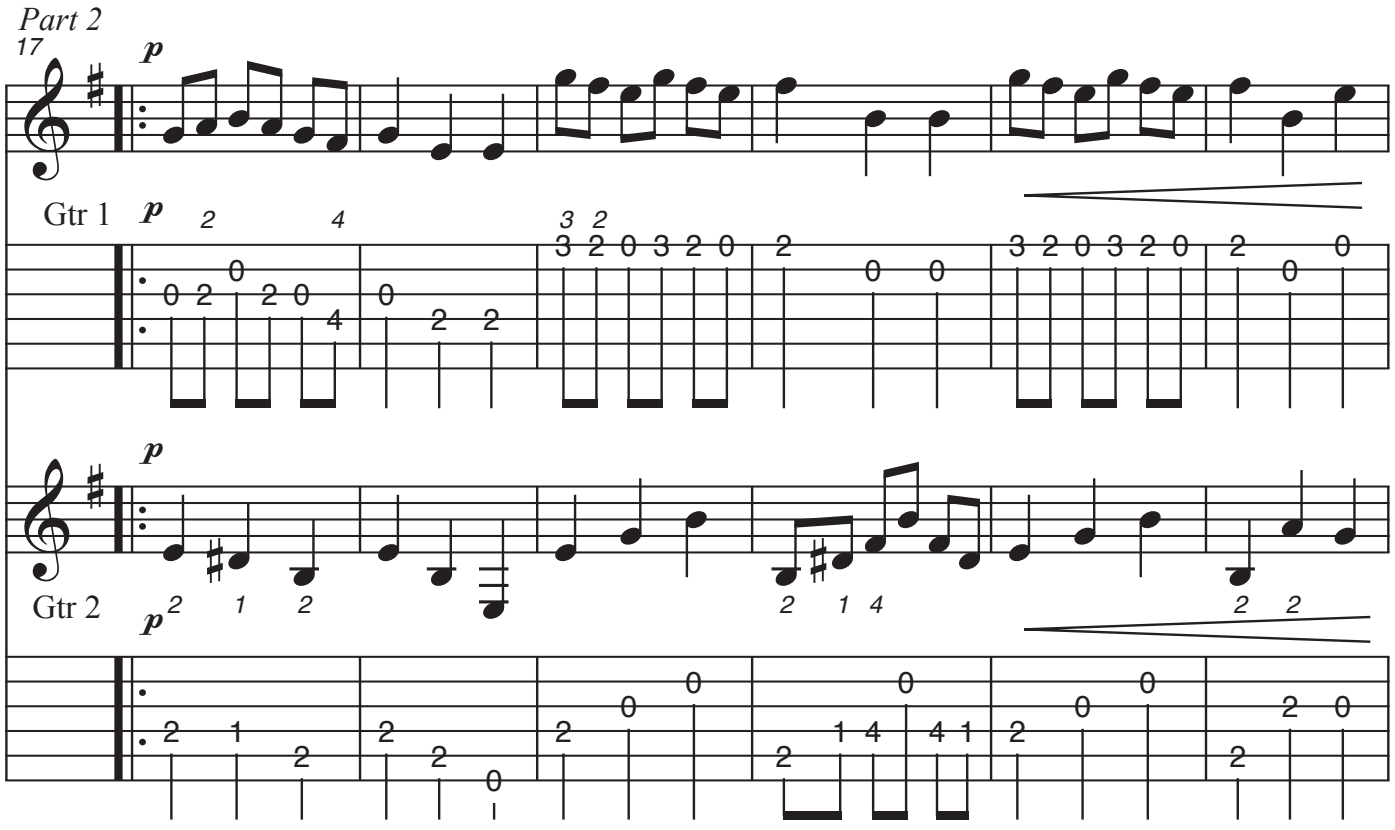
Minuet in G Major (con't)



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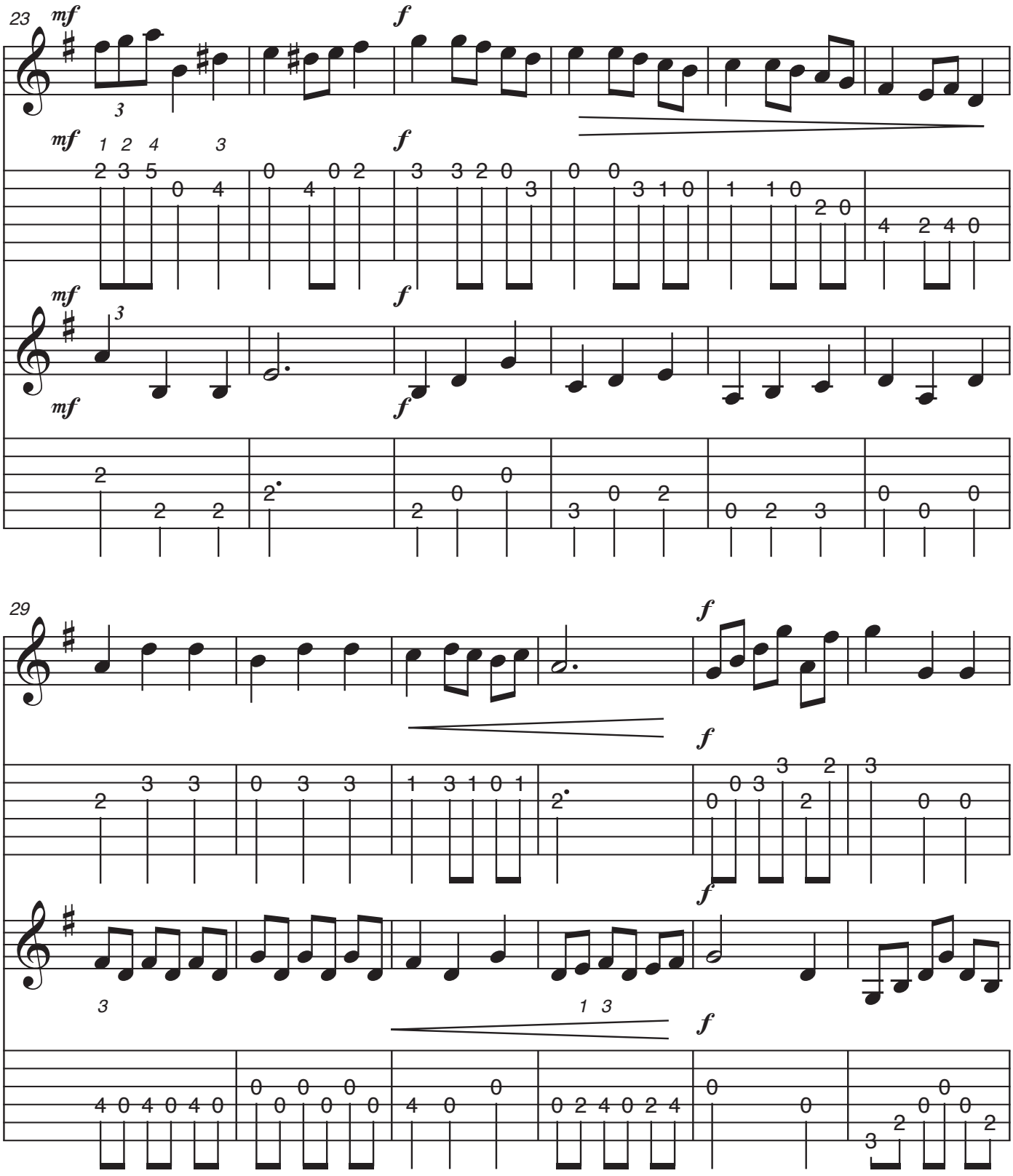
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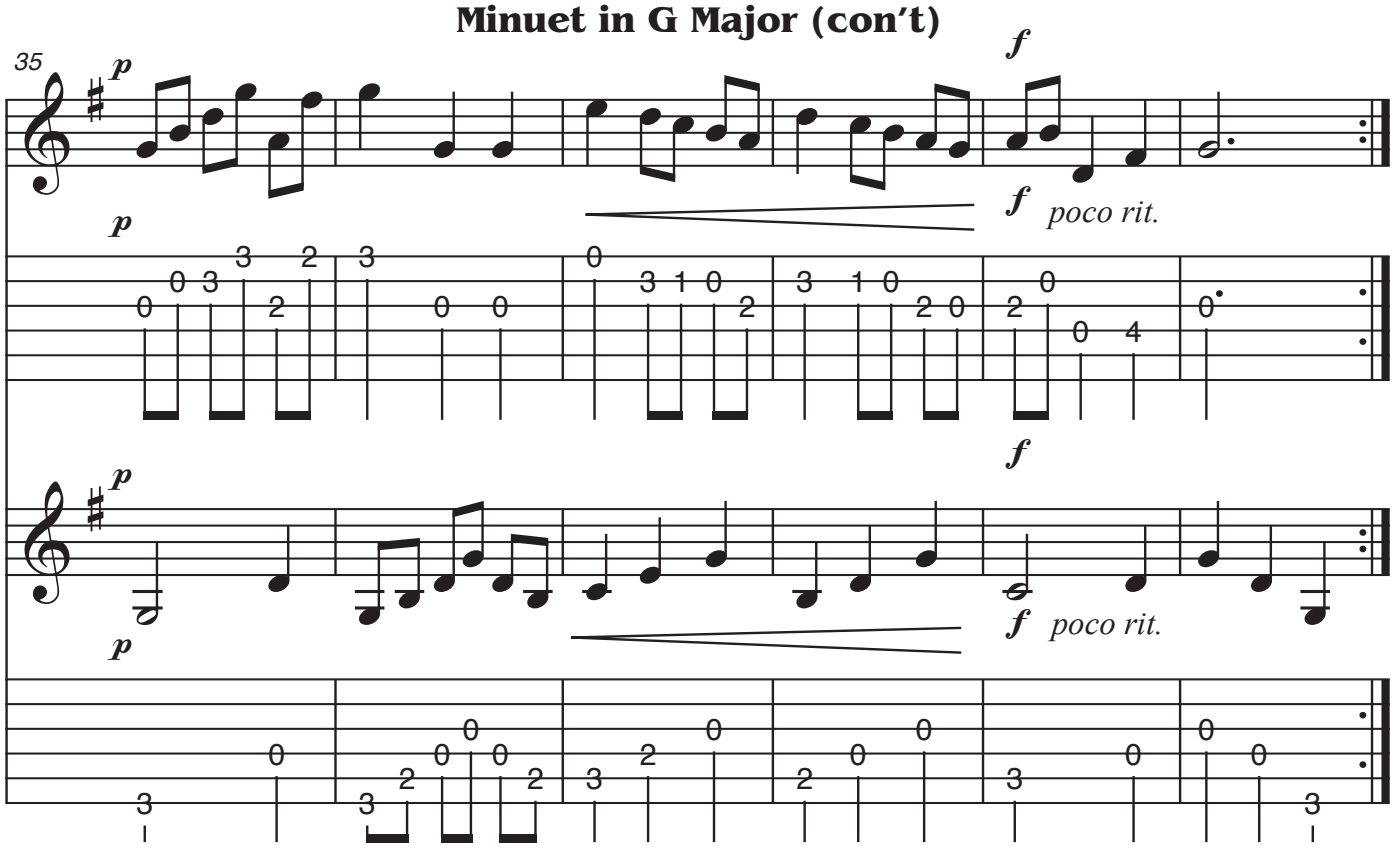

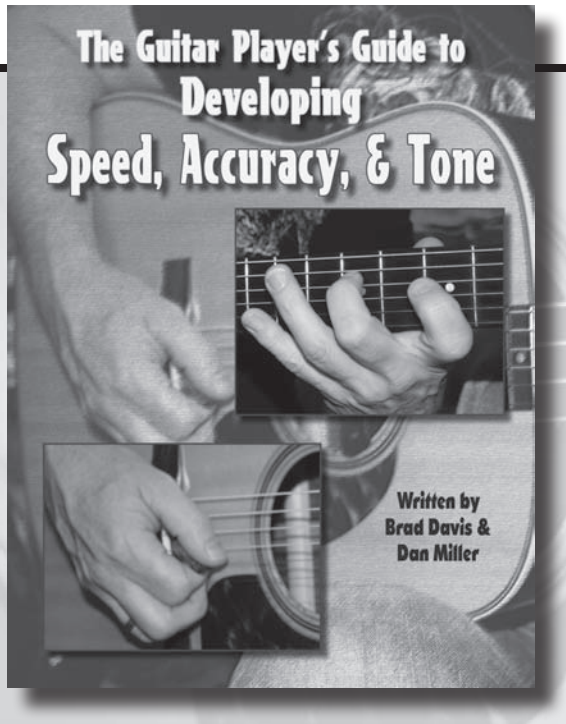

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Flatpick Profile: Rick Williams

by Dan Miller

For me, one the great benefits of traveling around the country conducting flatpicking workshops is that you get to meet a lot of very nice folks and some mighty fine pickers. In October 2010 Tim May and I traveled through 12 states in 18 days teaching flatpicking workshops and performing concerts. During our travels we had the opportunity to make a lot of new friends and visit, and pick with, some old friends. One of the new friends we had a chance to meet is Rick Williams.

Rick is one of those incredibly talented players who you may never get a chance to hear pick unless you just happen to be from Tulsa, Oklahoma. Since Rick spends the majority of his time teaching others how to play instead of performing on stage or recording CDs, his skill as a guitar player remains, for the most part, known only to those who take lessons from him at the Guitar House of Tulsa.

I knew about Rick before Tim May and I arrived in Tulsa because he and his wife Carrie run a small online business, Bluegrass Books Online (www.bluegrassbooksonline.com). On their web site they sell a few *Jam Tunes* books that Rick has written for guitar and mandolin. Prior to meeting them in person this past October I had not seen a copy of Rick's books, although they have been advertising their web site on our www.flatpick.com web site for years, so I had corresponded with Carrie on numerous occasions via email. I had heard through the flatpicker grapevine that Rick was a good player and so I had sent him an email inviting him to come by our workshop in Tulsa so we could have a chance to finally meet in person.

The workshop in Tulsa was hosted by Rob Bishline of Bishline Banjos (www.bishlinebanjos.com). Shortly after Tim and I arrived at Rob's shop, Rick and Carrie showed up and Tim and I finally got the opportunity to meet them. It wasn't long before others arrived, instruments came out, and a small pre-workshop jam session was underway. At the center of the jam were Rick Williams and Rob Bishline. After I heard Rick take his first couple of solos the rumors were confirmed: this guy can really pick!

Rick Williams has been playing the guitar for nearly thirty eight years and has been actively teaching others how to play at the Guitar House of Tulsa for 24 of those years. Originally from Portsmouth, Virginia, Rick started learning how to play the guitar when he was seven or eight years old. "I had an uncle who was just a few years older than me," he said. "When I was seven or eight my dad was showing my uncle how to play a few chords on the guitar. I peeked around the corner and thought to myself, 'That doesn't look hard!' Dad wouldn't let me touch his guitar, so I started begging and pleading for my own guitar." When Rick was eight years old his parents bought him a 3/4 size acoustic guitar from Rose's Department Store.

Rick's father showed him how to play a few basic chords and then taught him how to play lead and rhythm to Bill Doggett's "Honky Tonk." From there Rick started diving into his parent's record collection and worked hard to pick out chord progressions and melodies by ear. He remembers spending hours with songs by Chet Atkins, the Everly Brothers, and Roy Clark. He said, "My folks were country music fans, so that is the music that was in their record collection and that was the music that I heard on the radio. But I would try to learn how to play anything that I could wrap my ear around."

When he was twelve years old Rick was given an Alverez 12-string guitar. He said, "That was my pride and joy! I saw it in a music store and I liked the cool sound that it made. I just had to have it. I spent a long time learning how to play 'Malaguena' like Roy Clark on that twelve string." Since there was no opportunity for Rick to take guitar lessons, everything he learned was self-taught and by ear.

When Rick was thirteen his parents divorced and he moved with his mother to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Although he played electric guitar in the high school jazz band, the majority of his time was still spent learning to play instrumental tunes by ear. He said, "When I was eleven or twelve I got a tape recorder. I would learn the chord progression to a song and tape myself playing rhythm. Then I'd learn the lead part to the tune and play along with the rhythm tape that I'd made."

Rick didn't really discover bluegrass music, or start picking much with other people, until he was in his early twenties. He said, "I was grown up, married, and working at a lumber store before I discovered bluegrass. It wasn't until I started hanging out at the Guitar House of Tulsa and met guys like Rob Bishline that I started learning about bluegrass music. In fact, I knew about Ricky Skaggs as a country artist before I knew that he had played any bluegrass. I had learned how to play Ricky's song 'Country Boy' from his record, but it wasn't until later that I discovered that his picking was based in bluegrass."

Rick said that he and Rob Bishline hit it off right away and started picking together frequently. Rob knew about a bluegrass

band that was looking for a guitar player and he arranged for them to meet Rick. Rick said, "These guys introduced me to the New Grass Revival and I was blown away. That is when I really fell in love with this music. After that I started spending a lot of time picking with Rob and learning Pat Flynn licks. That led to discovering Tony Rice, Hot Rize and Charles Sawtelle, Dan Crary, Clarence White, and Doc Watson."

Although Rick spent the majority of his career learning by ear, he said that the one book that he bought that helped him make sense of bluegrass guitar playing was Orrin Star's *Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar*. He said, "For me, Orrin's book showed me what I could get away with when I was learning how to put these licks over the chords."

In about 1990 Rob Bishline and Rick Williams started performing in a trio with a bass player. They played together steadily for about thirteen years, playing everything from Flatt & Scruggs to Jim Croce, Bob Dylan, and the Eagles. When they first started performing Rob suggested that a professional player needed to know how to play more than one instrument, so that is when Rick began learning to play the mandolin.

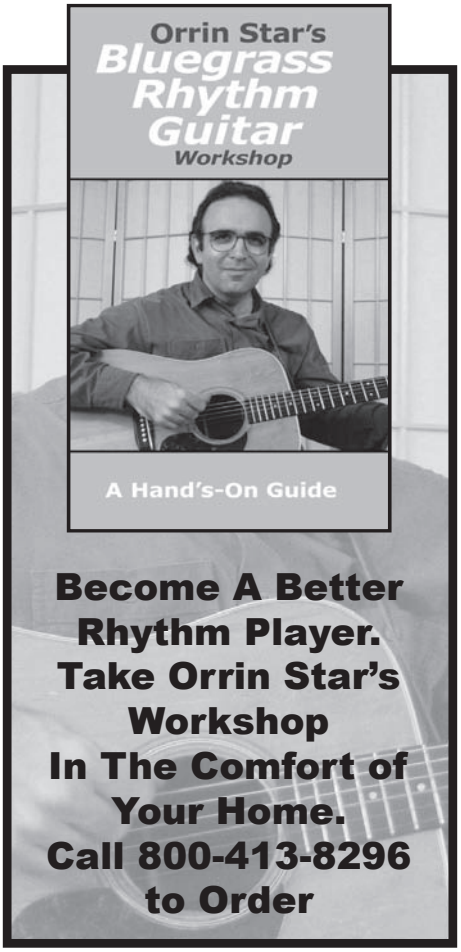
Rick had started hanging around the Guitar House of Tulsa in the mid-1980s. He hung around there so much that one day the owner, Bob Long, said, "If you are going to sit here and soak up my a/c, why don't you help me out and string up this guitar." That led to, "If you are going to hang around here, why don't you go sell that guy something?" That led to a full time sales job at the store. Rick started teaching lessons at the Guitar House of Tulsa in 1988 and that job continues to this day. He teaches a "mixed bag" of electric and acoustic guitar students studying everything from flatpicking fiddle tunes, to old Don Williams songs, to the latest Keith Urban hits.

For his flatpicking students, Rick starts them learning how to play a quarter-note solo to "Old Joe Clark." Once they have that under their belt, step 2 is to learn an eighth-note melody to the same song. From there, step 3 is to learn the same tune again, but a more complex arrangement. Once his students have developed some basic technique while working on "Old Joe Clark" he then begins to build their repertoire by teaching standard flatpicking jam session tunes like "Blackberry Blossom," "Whiskey Before Breakfast," "Arkansas Traveler," and "Turkey in the Straw." "I want them," Rick explains, "to learn all of the songs that are most likely to be called in a jam session."

Early in his teaching career, when one of his students was learning a new tune, Rick would send them home with a recording of the tune so that they could have something to listen to while they were studying the arrangement. Additionally, Rick sent them home with a recording of a rhythm track so that students could have something to play along with while they were practicing the lead break. After Rick had written out and recorded about 25 different jam session tunes, and back up tracks, for his students he decided to put them all together in a book so that he would have a "text book" for his flatpicking students. He titled the book *Bluegrass Guitar Jam Tunes*.

Rick's students loved having all of their favorite flatpicking jam tunes in one book. For each of the first five songs ("Old Joe Clark," "Arkansas Traveler," "Turkey in the Straw," "Redwing," and "Wildwood Flower") Rick included the tune's basic melody as well as an intermediate level arrangement.

In the next section of the book Rick provides an intermediate level arrangement of 16 different fiddle tunes ("Blackberry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Blossom," "Eighth of January," "Bill Cheatham," "Billy in the Lowground," "Cattle in the Cane," "Fire on the Mountain," "Fisher's Hornpipe," "Liberty," "Lost Indian," "Red Haired Boy," "Sailor's Hornpipe," "Salt Creek," "St. Anne's Reel," "Stoney Point," "Temperance Reel," and "Whiskey Before Breakfast"). The last four tunes in the book are vocal tunes ("Little Maggie," "Bury Me Beneath the Willow," "Banks of the Ohio," and "Will the Circle Be Unbroken"). Rick once again provides both a basic melody and an intermediate level arrangement for these songs. On each of the last four songs Rick uses a lot of crosspicking technique. The final section of the book included ending tags, scale exercises, chord charts, and a section on playing bluegrass rhythm.

The book is written in standard music notation and tablature and is accompanied by two CDs. There are three practice tracks per tune, totaling over two hours of practice material. Each CD track has a guitar, mandolin, and bass rhythm section. The first track is slow, with melody and rhythm, so you can learn the melody and practice your rhythm playing as well. The second track is the same as the first, but with the melody removed. Now you have a slow backup band to solo over. The third track is faster and goes three times through the tune starting with a mandolin solo, then a guitar solo, and then rhythm only, so you can practice your rhythm and have a place in the tune to play your solo, just like in a real jam session.

After Rick had finished his guitar book, and a similar book for mandolin, his wife Carrie thought that it would be a good idea to put the books online so that other guitar and mandolin players could benefit from Rick's hard work. She and Rick started the www.bluegrassbooksonline.com site and has been selling them over the Internet for about five years now. Rick is currently working on a second set of books featuring a different set of tunes. The website also includes samples from the books and some free lessons that you can download. I encourage everyone to go online and check it out!

Rick calls the first track of the CD "Introduction" and on that track he plays an advanced version of "Blackberry Blossom." While the tab for "Blackberry Blossom" is included in the book, the arrangement is not as complex as the one that Rick plays in the introductory track. Many of the people who bought the book asked if they could have a transcription of the version of "Blackberry" that Rick put on the introductory track, so he added that transcription to the website. In this issue we are presenting both versions of "Blackberry Blossom." On the audio CD you can hear both the intermediate level version and the more advanced version, plus we have provided the slow practice track. You can learn Rick's arrangements and then jam along with him!

Currently Rick teaches private lessons Monday through Friday at the Guitar House of Tulsa, as well as private web cam lessons. He also works at the store selling and repairing instruments. If you ever find yourself passing through Tulsa, stop by the store and visit with Rick. I'm sure he would be happy to show you all of the fine guitars that are hanging on the walls there at the store and he will probably be happy to sit and pick a few tunes with you.

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Blackberry Blossom
(First Arrangement)

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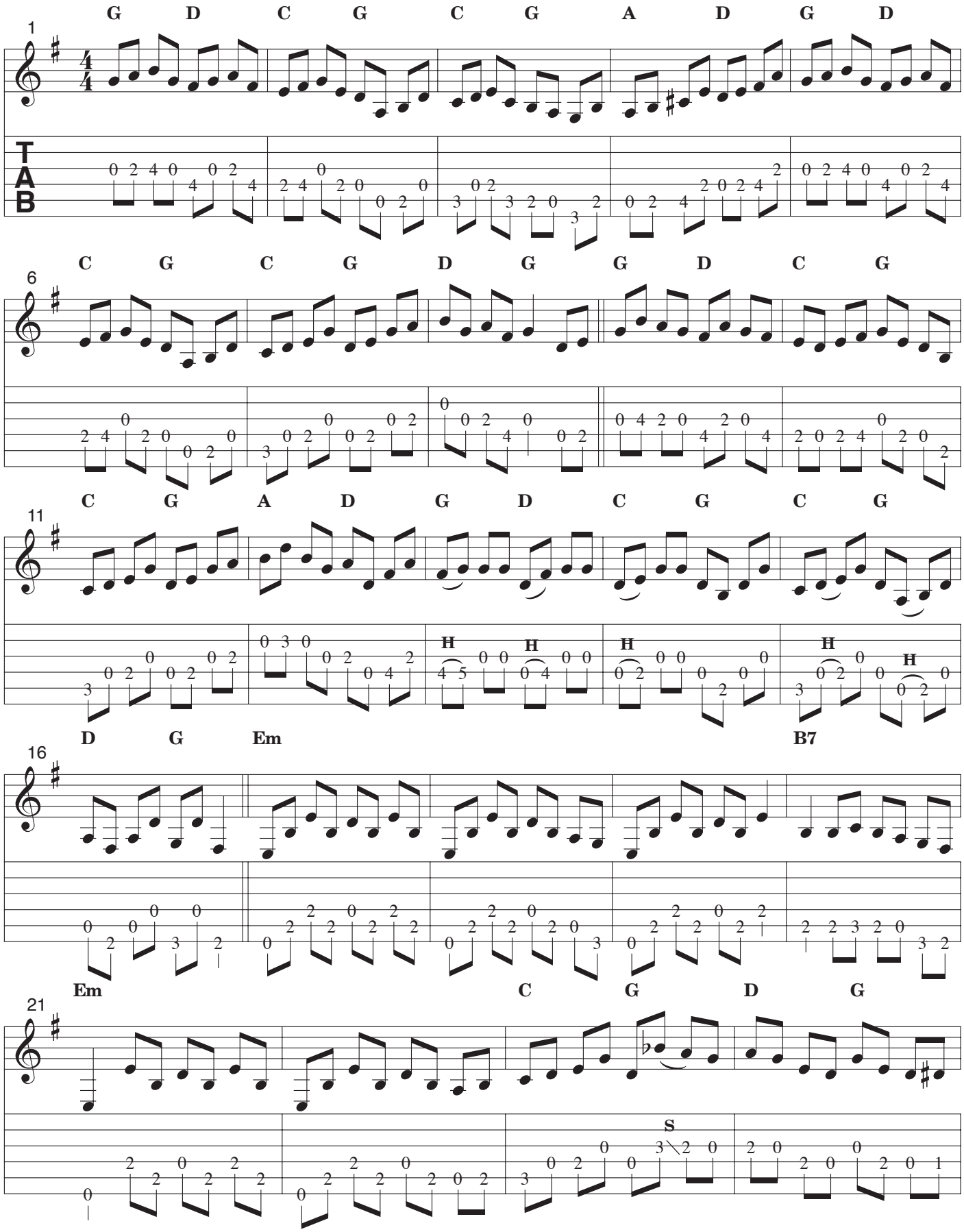
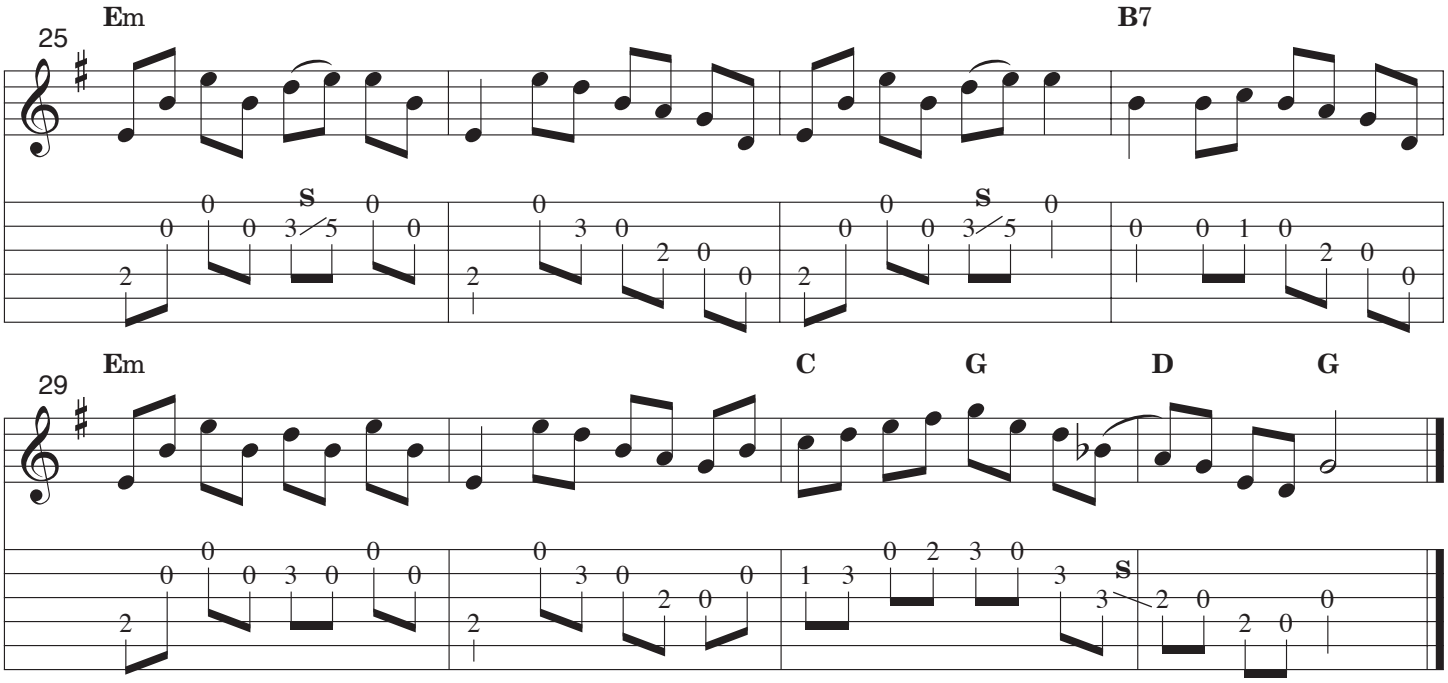

Blackberry Blossom (con't)

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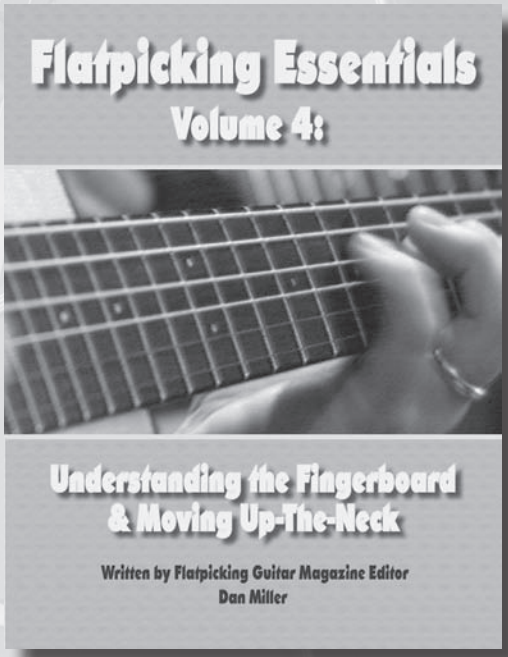

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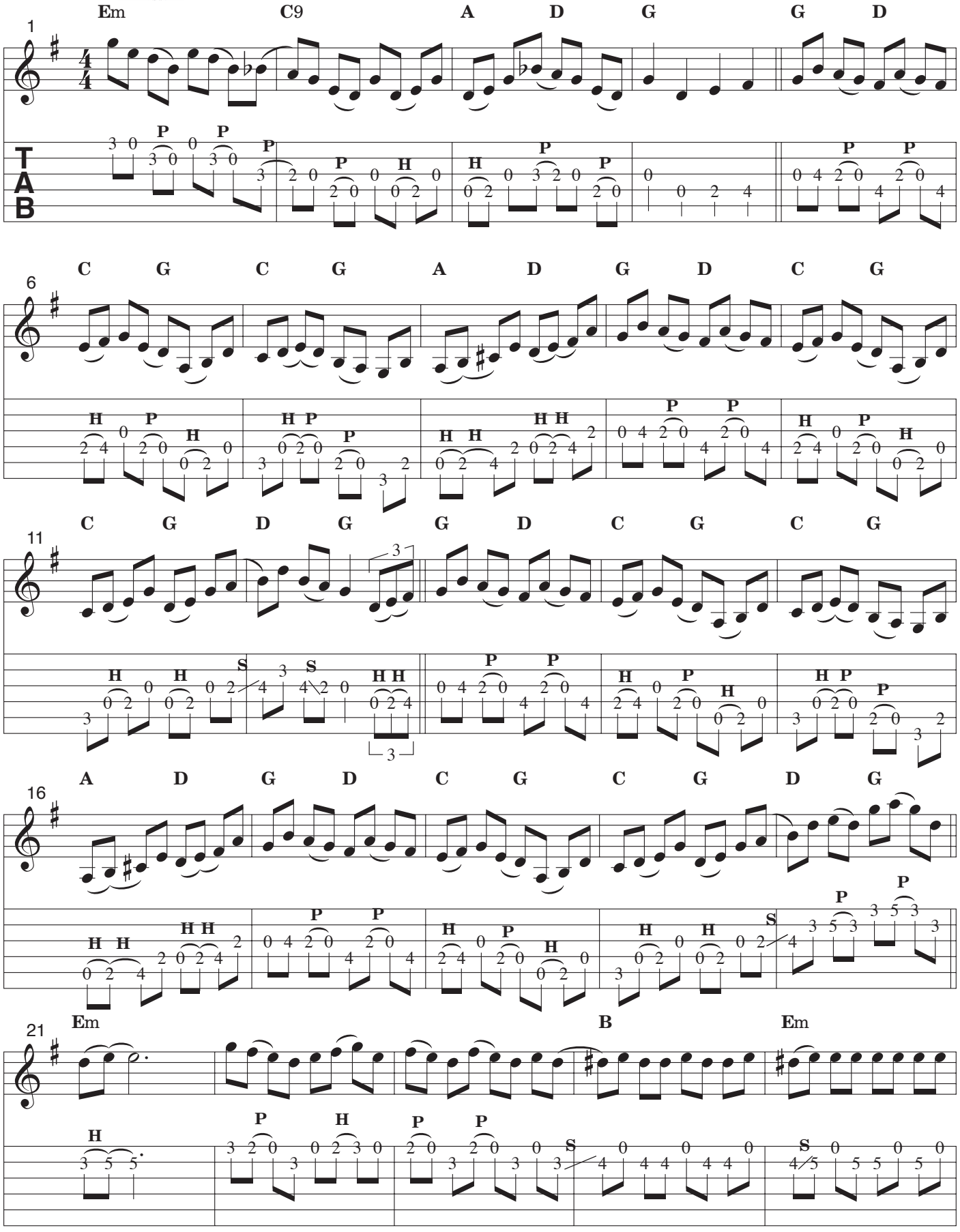
Audio CD
Track 26-27

Blackberry Blossom
(Second Arrangement)

Arranged by Rick Williams

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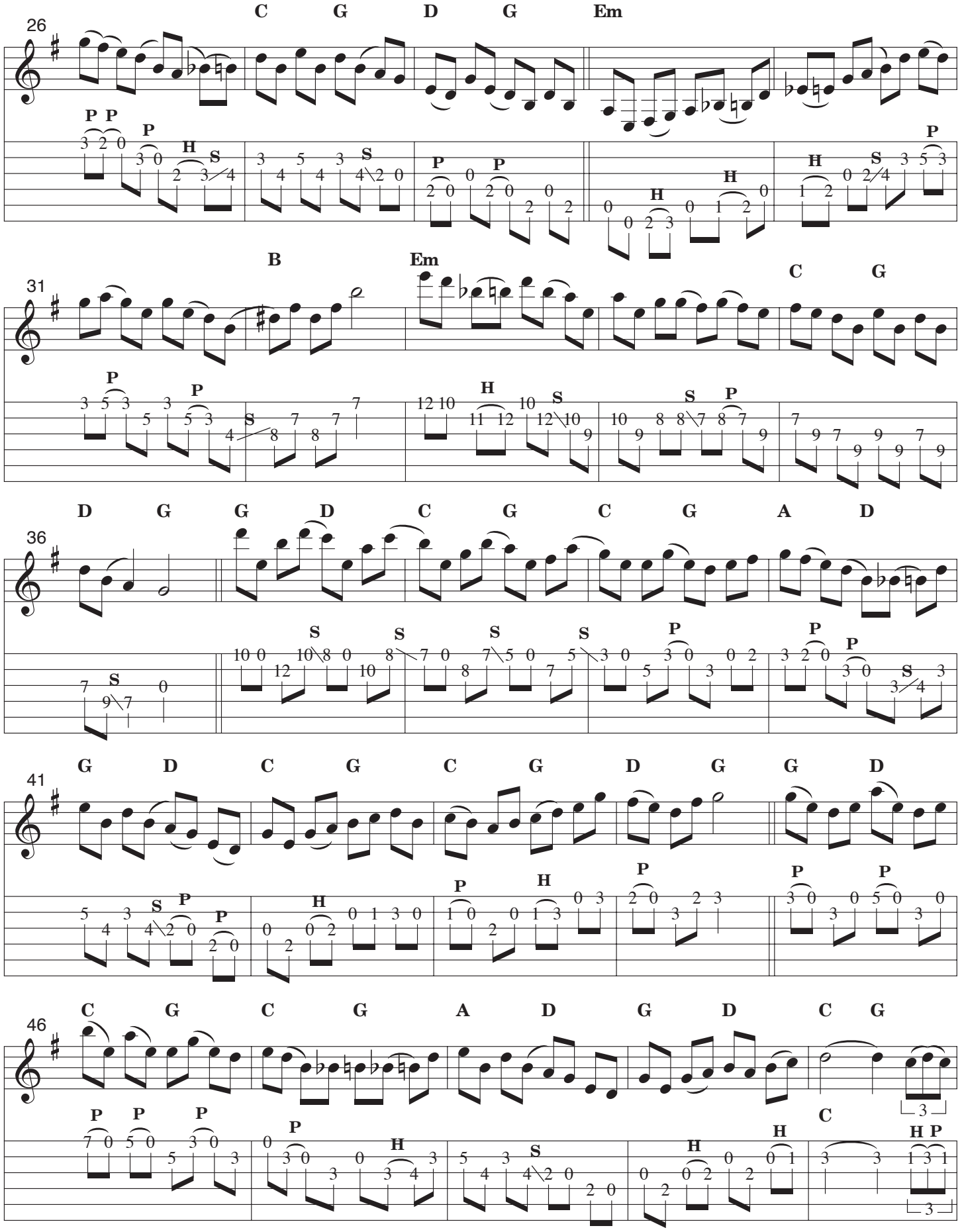
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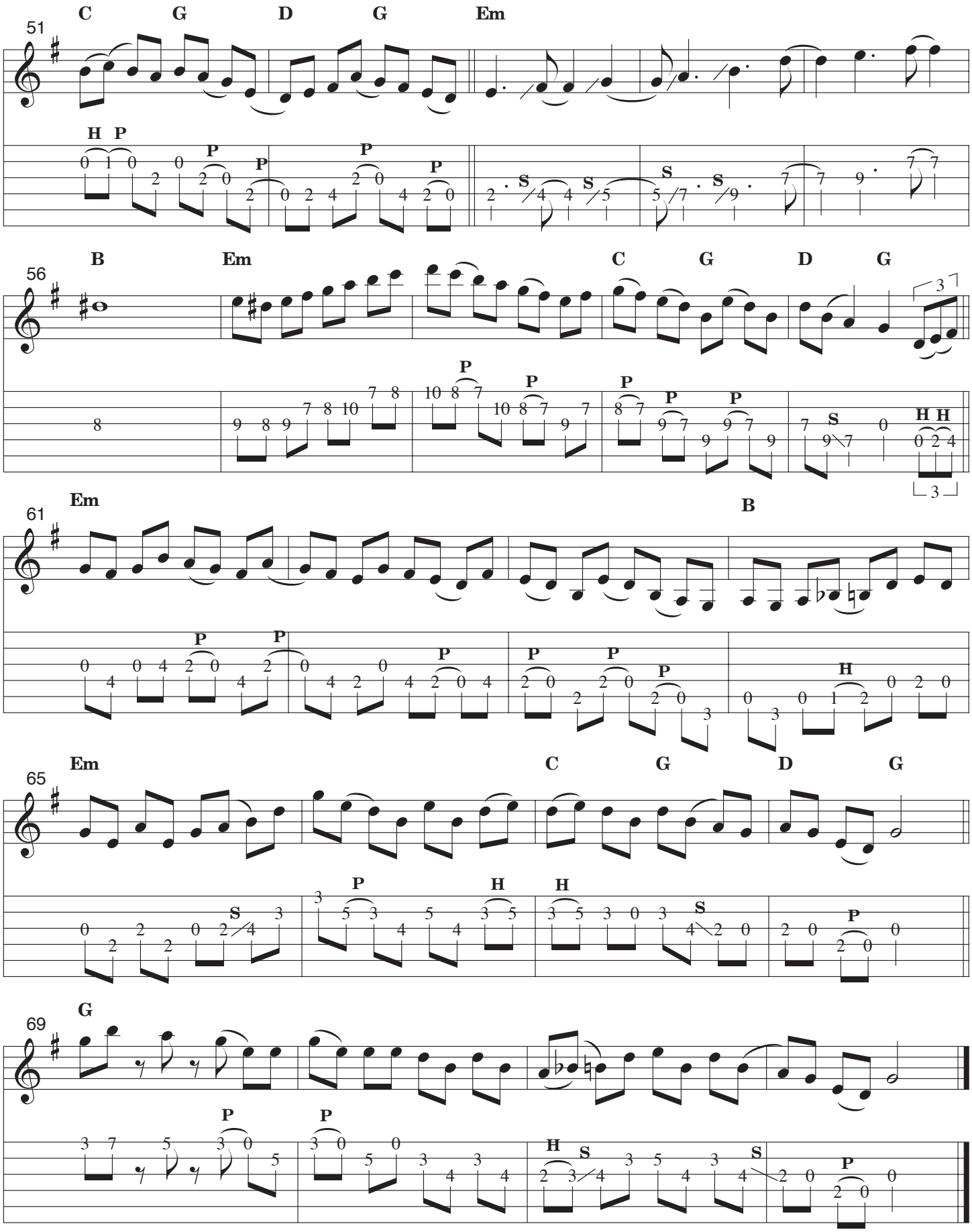
Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

The Minor Pentatonic

We have discussed playing over minor keys in the past. One of my favorite kinds of songs for improvisation uses the relative minor for the changes and the melody, or is a tune in a minor blues mode. Although it may seem formidable at first, in practice it is not that difficult to learn to solo and play in the minor keys.

Exercises – Pentatonic A Minor

Exercise 1 is the basic pentatonic blues scale in A minor. Notice the pattern: play 5th and 8th frets on the E and B strings and play 5th and 7th frets on the other strings. What could be simpler, right?

Exercise 2 is a similar sequence showing a bit of a lick over this change.

Exercise 3 shows playing these notes against a C major. Notice the ending chord. In exercise I the ending chord is an Amin9 – the A minor chord with the 9th note added on top. By moving that top note up one fret to the C note playing on the 8th fret the chord becomes a C major chord.

Analysis of this last chord shows that the notes from the bottom up are G-C-E-C. Regular readers will recall that the notes of a C chord played in root position are C-E-G-C. This new chord played on the fifth fret is named C major, but uses the second inversion form, meaning that the fifth, the G note is played in the bass.

For reference the first inversion of a chord has the third in the bass. For a C major triad the first inversion chord is spelled E-G-C. The second inversion is spelled G-C-E, but both forms a still named as C chords. In some music literature you may see inversion written as C/E, or C/G, to denote which inversion, and therefore which note, should be played in the bass.

Relative Minor

Wait, I thought we had established that we were playing over the A minor 7 chord using an A Minor pentatonic? Why does that form also work over a C Major chord?

Remember that the A minor is the relative minor to the C major. This means that the key of A minor has the same key signature as the C major: no sharps or flats. It also means that notes that work in C major will likewise work in A minor, and vice versa. Note that in most cases when playing over an A minor chord the lick starts on an A or the fifth, an E, and probably ends on an A. When playing over a C chord, even though I might use the same form and a lot of the same notes, the starting and ending notes are probably a C or G.

The next exercise continues in the C/A minor mode, with the addition of some chromatic ideas to extend and enhance the melody.

Exercise in D Minor

Move on to Exercise 7, which is a similar exercise in D minor. D minor is the relative minor to F major, so it has one flat, the B flat note common to the keys of F and D minor. When you play through the exercise you will hear that the melody fits the D minor chord, and it also fits over a C7 chord. That's because the C dominant 7 chord which also uses the flat 7 note, a B flat.

Fun with Chord Substitutions

So, does that mean that instead of playing the C-F-G scales in first position you can choose to play notes from chords like Am7 and Dm7 instead? Absolutely! These types of substitutions are commonly used to add spice to the sound and give you more ideas to play over standard changes; you can also easily play songs in minor keys like A and D minor. Move the form up two frets to seventh position and you are playing in B minor and E minor. Tunes like the one that Tony Rice penned in the Spacegrass genre, "Marwest" is similar, and uses these scale forms to solo over the changes.

About the Tune – "Miners Turn"

"Miners Turn" is a new tune that I made up for this issue. It uses the A minor and D minor forms throughout the melody, and is a nice vehicle for improvisation. Play through the changes in both 1st and 5th positions on the fingerboard and experiment with different ideas based upon these minor blues forms.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

Mike's guitar music can be heard regularly in the Rocky Mountain West. Contact information on recordings, books, and correspondence can be found at: http://www.madduxband.com/ and search Facebook and YouTube for the latest clips and news.

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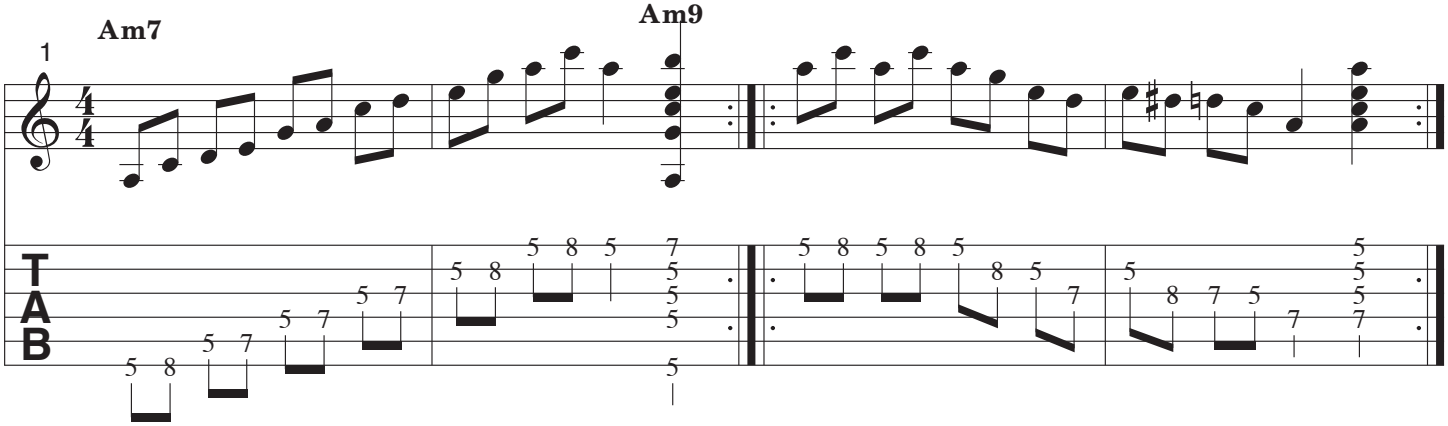
Maddux Exercises

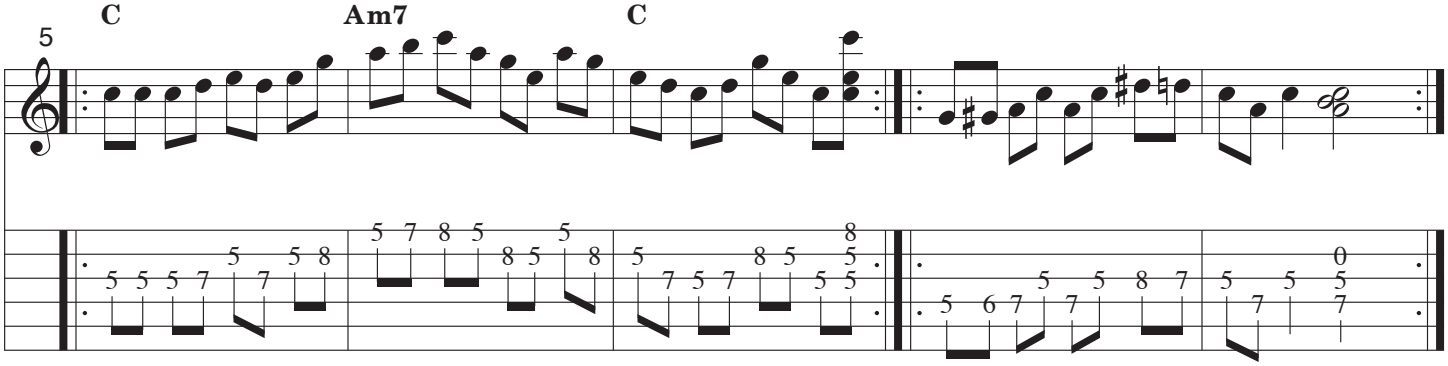
Arranged by Mike Maddux

Exercise 1:



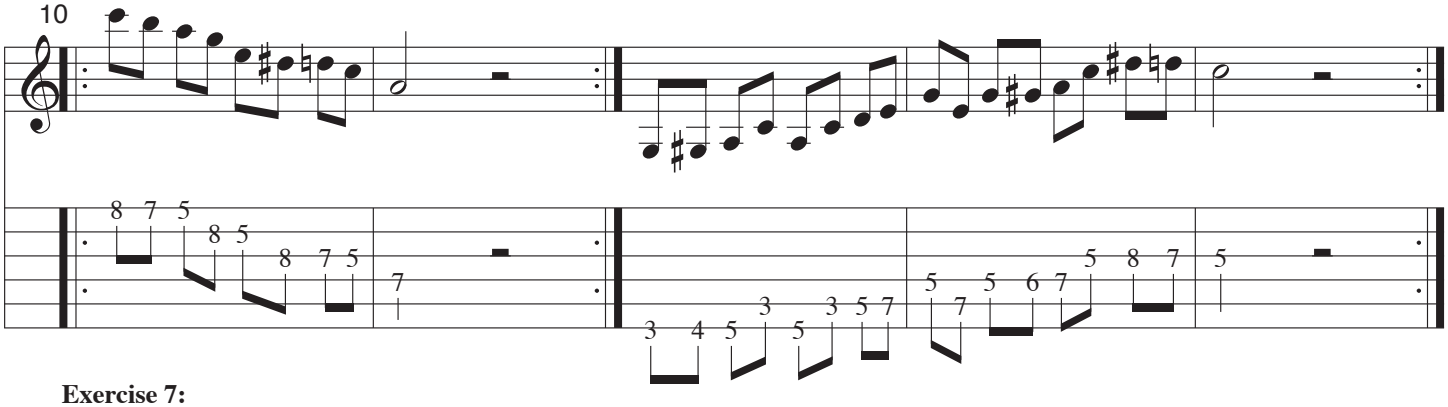
Exercise 2:

Exercise 3:



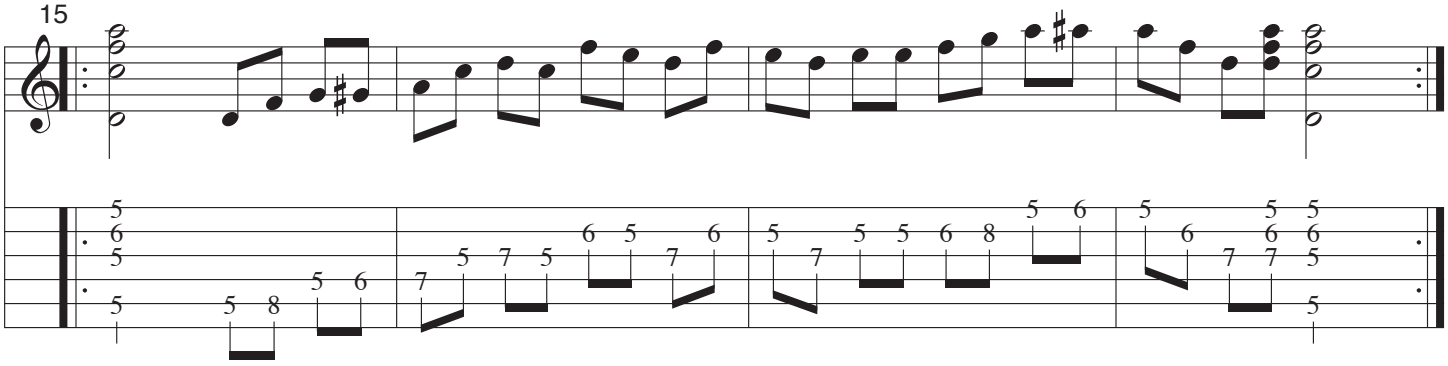
Exercise 4:

Exercise 5:



Exercise 6:

Exercise 7:



Audio CD
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Miners Turn

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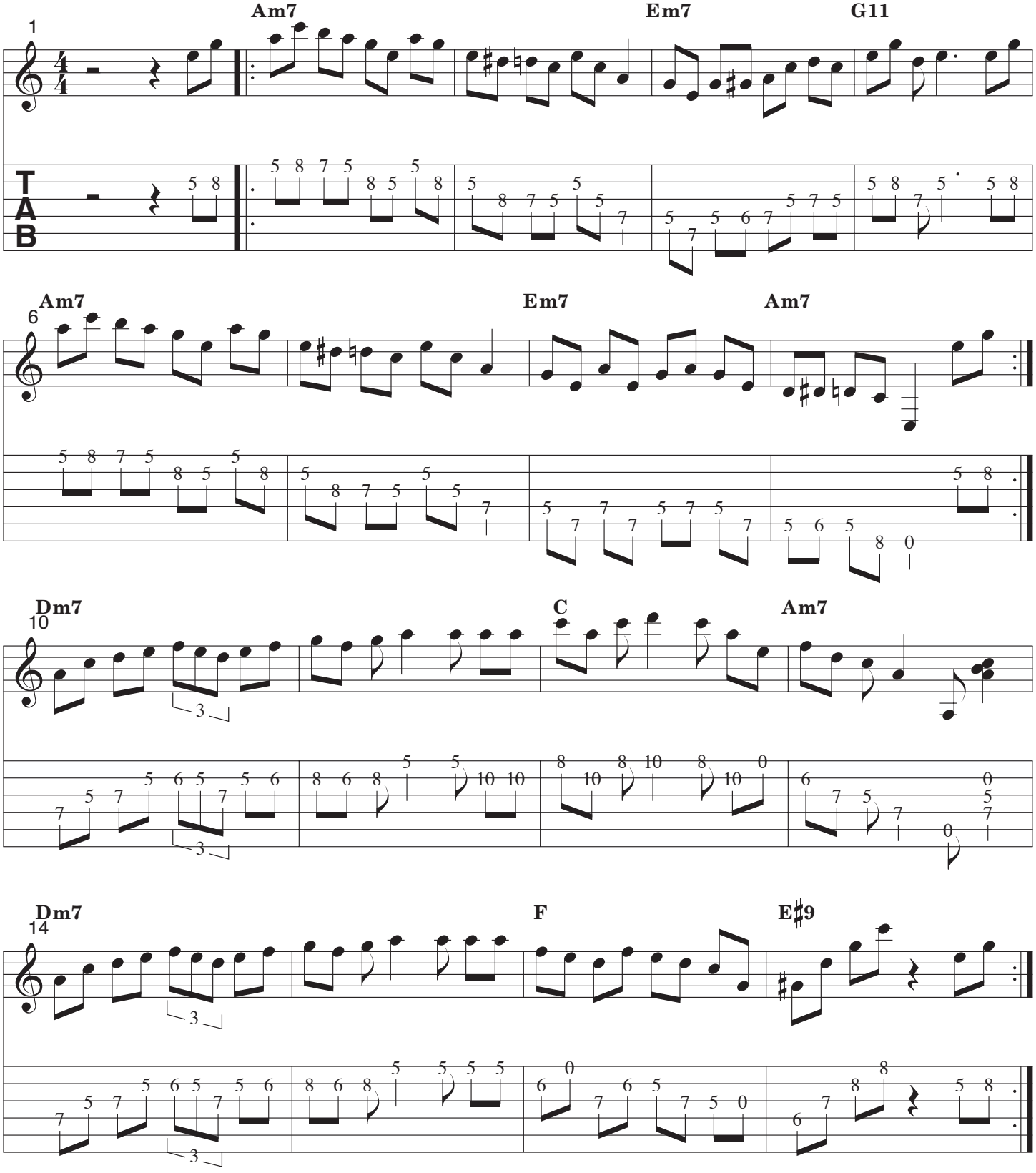
PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Hello, all you pickers. I am straying from my usual fiddle tune agenda, as I am wont to do from time to time, to discuss issues that are as important to your success as learning to play well itself.

One of the first questions I ask students is if they play with others, or would like to. I then ask if they perform on stage, or would like to. As used here, stage can mean anything from the local coffeehouse to Carnegie Hall (but remember that you have to practice to get to Carnegie Hall). "Stage" is anywhere people are listening to you perform without performing themselves. If everyone is performing, then it's called a jam session. And, of course, performances and jam sessions share many of the same requirements.

I wrote a column a few years back (*FGM* V10 N4) in which elements of jamming were broached. In this column, I will re-broach those elements, and add others that are relevant to performing specifically. These columns were the result of my seeing unprepared student after unprepared student hit the stage (or jam session) only to have less-than-salutary experiences. These columns contain the things I concentrate on in guitar lessons and performance workshops.

As you read this, relate it to your own performance level. You can be a complete neophyte and still benefit greatly from these ideas. Keep your sights realistic but ambitious. If you find, upon scrutiny, that everything is broken, performance-wise, just concentrate on one or two issues at a time. The things I describe here are things I work on myself. In fact, I actually rent a rehearsal space from time to time just to focus my efforts.

READING *EASY-TAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in sync", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

In my jamming column, I described the requirements for successful jamming, focussing mostly on knowing the repertoire and the mechanics attendant thereto: starting the tune with certainty and clarity, switching from rhythm to lead, switching from lead to rhythm, signalling the end of the tune and, most importantly, not crashing the tune.

I delineated the differences among old time, bluegrass, Irish and flatpick jams. I talked about protocol and etiquette, about playing nicely with others.

I reminded everyone to shower before the jam, and admonished people not to do anything they wouldn't do in front of their grandmas.

I pointed out that mistakes are absolutely inevitable; that no matter how much you practice, mistakes *will* happen (and often in the unlikeliest places). And that time should be devoted to dealing with mistakes in real time: when you're practicing gig material, don't allow yourself to stop and start over again.

I mentioned that the only thing that will kill a tune in a jam session is dropping or adding beats or stopping and then starting over after a mistake. Wrong chords and botched solos may make things a bit unpleasant, but they won't kill the tune.

For a more thorough discussion of the above, check out the original column.

All of the stuff I described for jamming goes double and triple for performing. The performing circle is concentric to the jamming circle and eclipses it, as it were.

Ready? Okay, bucko, let's go:

The Big Truth:

I've been performing for fifty years, and I've learned the hard way that my key to being relaxed onstage is to know my stuff. Being prepared. Having my ducks in a row. Pouring my gravy carefully over my donuts (Hey: you've got your guilty pleasures and I've got mine).

What is surprising is *how prepared* one must be. One must rehearse, rehearse and rehearse some more. At the venue, there will be distractions not even imagined (see next page), and you won't have nearly the cerebral space to focus on your playing (and singing) that you have at home. The material has got to be down cold. If you're an improviser, then you've got to have your chops—scales, licks, conditioning, concentration, melodies, progressions, lyrics—all squared away. Whatever your bag is, quadruple the amount of practice you think you need to get up to speed.

Rehearse at Home:

Wear the clothes you are going to wear at the gig. Stand or sit the way you plan to. Designate a stage and an audience (real or imaginary). If you have a sound system, set it up and use it. If you don't, set up a broomstick to simulate a microphone and practice "working" it. If you have lights you can shine on yourself, do so. Use different areas of your house and different setups.

What you're trying to do here is get a sense—any and every sense—of what your environment will be. The venue will probably be different from what you have imagined and simulated—perhaps very different. But that fact underscores the impor-

tance of this preparation: there is literally an infinite number of venue environments, when all the factors comprising those environments are taken into consideration. By working in your simulated venue(s), you are training yourself to be versatile and thus better to roll with the punches.

Play Your Set:

At home, pick a time that your gig will start and a set length (let's say forty-five minutes). Go into a room different than the one in which you will be performing. Sit there until five minutes after your start time,then walk in and take the stage.

Play your set, including announcements and song intros. Don't allow anything to interrupt this set: you have to play that set no matter what happens. Through bloody noses, skink neuterings and headlice outbreaks you *have* to play your set.

Audio- or videotape your set and review it however many times it takes to notice the stuff you're doing that doesn't work (possibly to the point of irritation). Keep in mind that you are probably accustomed to your. . . er, idiosynchrosies and your audience may not be. However filled with good will they may be, their point of irritation may be reached sooner than yours.

So, as you view your performance, be brutal. This is your chance to fix things you likely haven't even noticed in the privacy of your home. Watch your body language and your facial expressions. Scrutinize your playing and singing. Listen for sour vocal notes, especially connecting notes in melodic passages. Again, listen and watch many times. The way I know an album of mine is ready to be released is when I can listen to it ten times without getting irritated.

At the Gig, Be Ready for *Anything*:

Now, I may have frightened some of you with my descriptions of what can happen on stage, but that's actually a large part of the fun of performing. And the better prepared you are and the more stage experience you accumulate, the more fluidly you'll be able to go with whatever situation greets you at the venue, and the more you'll enjoy it. And if it's a really awful experience—and a certain number of them are—you can add it to your Terrible Gig file, occupants of which make for great musician "war stories".

Anything can and will happen onstage. I mentioned some eccentric distractions earlier, but more quotidian ones are bad sound, bad acoustics, a noisy audience, a noisy espresso machine, tuning problems, traffic and the like.

Personnel things can happen too: bandmates can show up too drunk or high to play well (or at all); drunk, inept or simply unwanted people can walk up and join in; or you may be asked to play a song or tune you don't know (I say much more about that in the *Jamming* column.)

The upshot here is to be ready for anything, and the best way to be ready for anything is to experience everything. That's an impossible grail, of course, but the more gigs you rack up the more experience you gain, and the more experience you gain the fewer surprises you encounter.

There you have it, friends. Be patient and focused, but keep it fun. Accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative. . . .

A Few of My War Stories

•During a *Prairie Home Companion* broadcast from Mantorville, Minnesota in 1978, the town police radio traffic was bleeding into our sound system. The police obligingly curtailed communication until after the show.

•Another *Prairie Home Companion* broadcast, this one at an outdoor venue in St Paul, Minnesota, was crashed by an inebriated "blues harp player" who started blowing hard in the middle of host Garrison Keillor's monologue. He was poilitely but firmly spirited off stage.

•One night, during an extended engagement with a Nashville road band at the Best Western Motel lounge in Fort Dodge, Iowa in 1971, a patron (again, inebriated) stood on a table in front of the band and took off her clothes.

•When judging a fiddle contest in the Upper Midwest around 1988, the director of the contest gave me a list of the top five place winners. I could see that the order had gotten reversed and told him so. The director (yup, you guessed it: drunk) insisted that I read the winners as listed. I told him I would, but that when—not if, but *when*—the mistake was revealed, I would not go back onstage to correct the error. I read the results, the mistake was discovered, the director had to make the announcement because I wouldn't, and he and I never worked together again.

•In the early eighties, I was booked to play a gig in a small southern Minnesota town. After I arrived, it became clear that they thought they were getting Garrison Keillor. Even when I explained that my name was Adam Granger, they still thought I had a radio show called *A Prairie Home Companion*.

•Adam's rock and roll band, The Coachmen, was booked to play a party for the Norman, Oklahoma Jaycees in 1964. When the end time for the gig came, the attendees wouldn't let us leave. We had to stay and play until my dad came to the party site looking for us (we were fifteen).

•During 1968, Adam played in a smoky basement nightclub in Vienna, Austria (his dad was a Fulbright lecturer). The only food offered in the club was *schmalzbrodt*: lard slathered on heavy bread. It cost the equivalent of eleven cents.

•At a wedding at a cabin in northern Minnesota around 1997, the only power was a generator that was louder than we were.

And so on, and so on, until you have a life's worth of stories to tell to people who may or may not want to hear them (or read them).

And the longer you play, the more interesting it seems to get, and the more fun it somehow becomes. So everyone get out there and play with and for others!

Adam teaches classes and workshops in stagemanship at music camps and festivals around North America. Performing situations are simulated, peer review is offered, war stories and anecdotes are traded, scripts are read, band personnel and song intros are practiced, mid-song mistakes are dealt with, and so on. They are a real hoot.

Bill Bay Presents

Flatpicking Solos

"A Place of Rest"

I have always loved Appalachian ballads. The melodies are usually so beautiful that they are frequently sung by a solo voice with absolutely no accompaniment. "A Place of Rest" is a guitar solo written in the style of an Appalachian ballad. It is in E minor. The piece starts with the lyrical melody and then moves into a section utilizing quartal harmony. This is followed by a variation of the melody harmonized in thirds. I wrote and recorded this on a 7 string guitar with the 7th string tuned to B. However, alternate notes for the 7th string pedal tones are shown in the tab part, so this solo can be performed on a 6 string guitar. I hope you like it.

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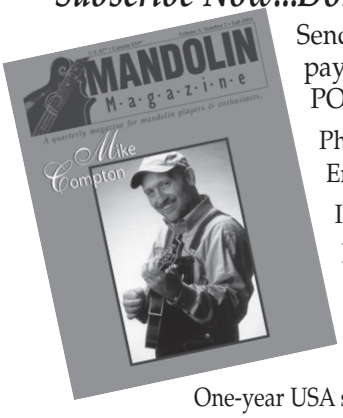

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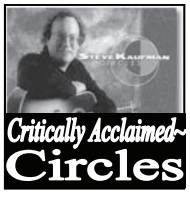

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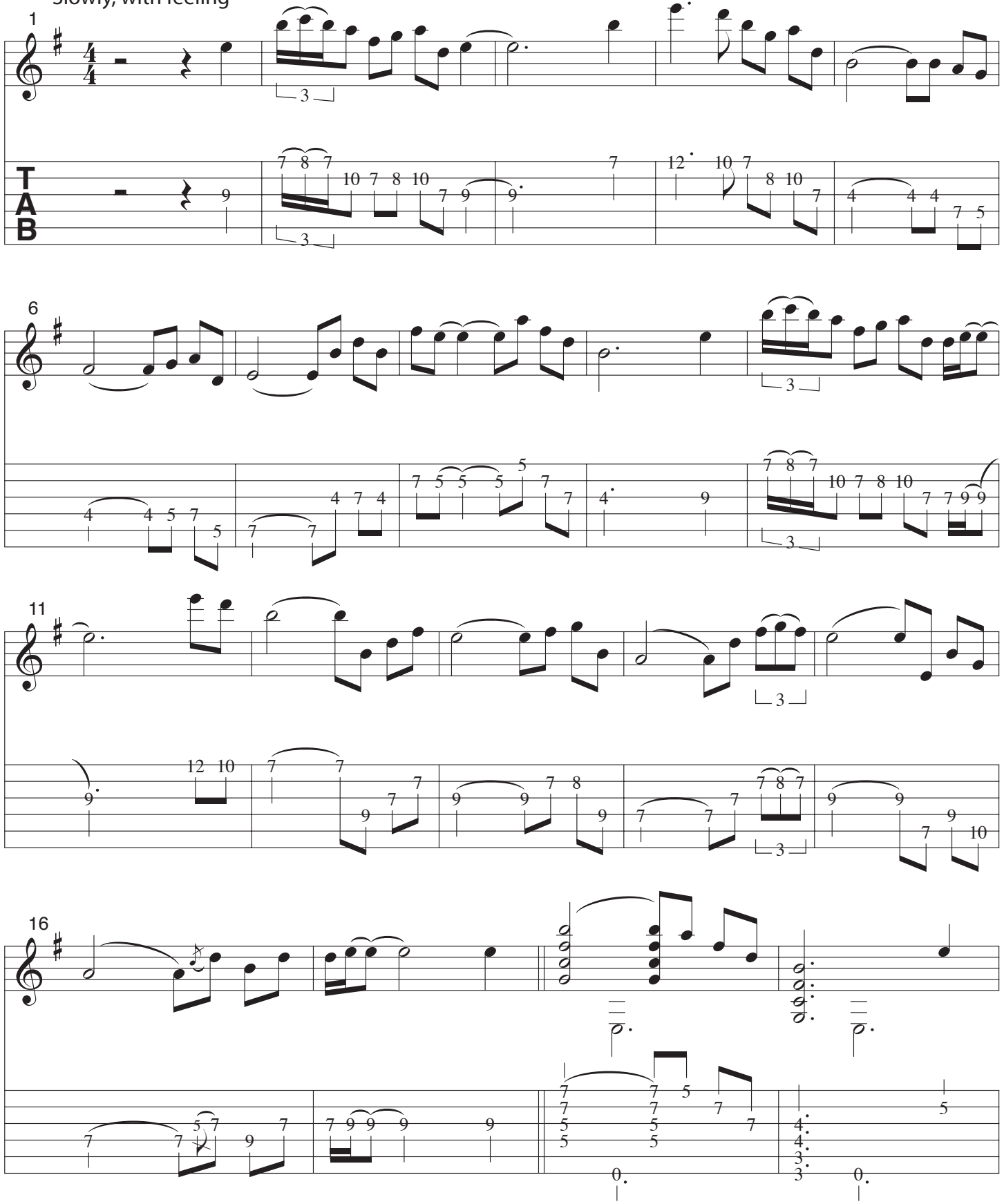
Written by Bill Bay

Slowly, with feeling

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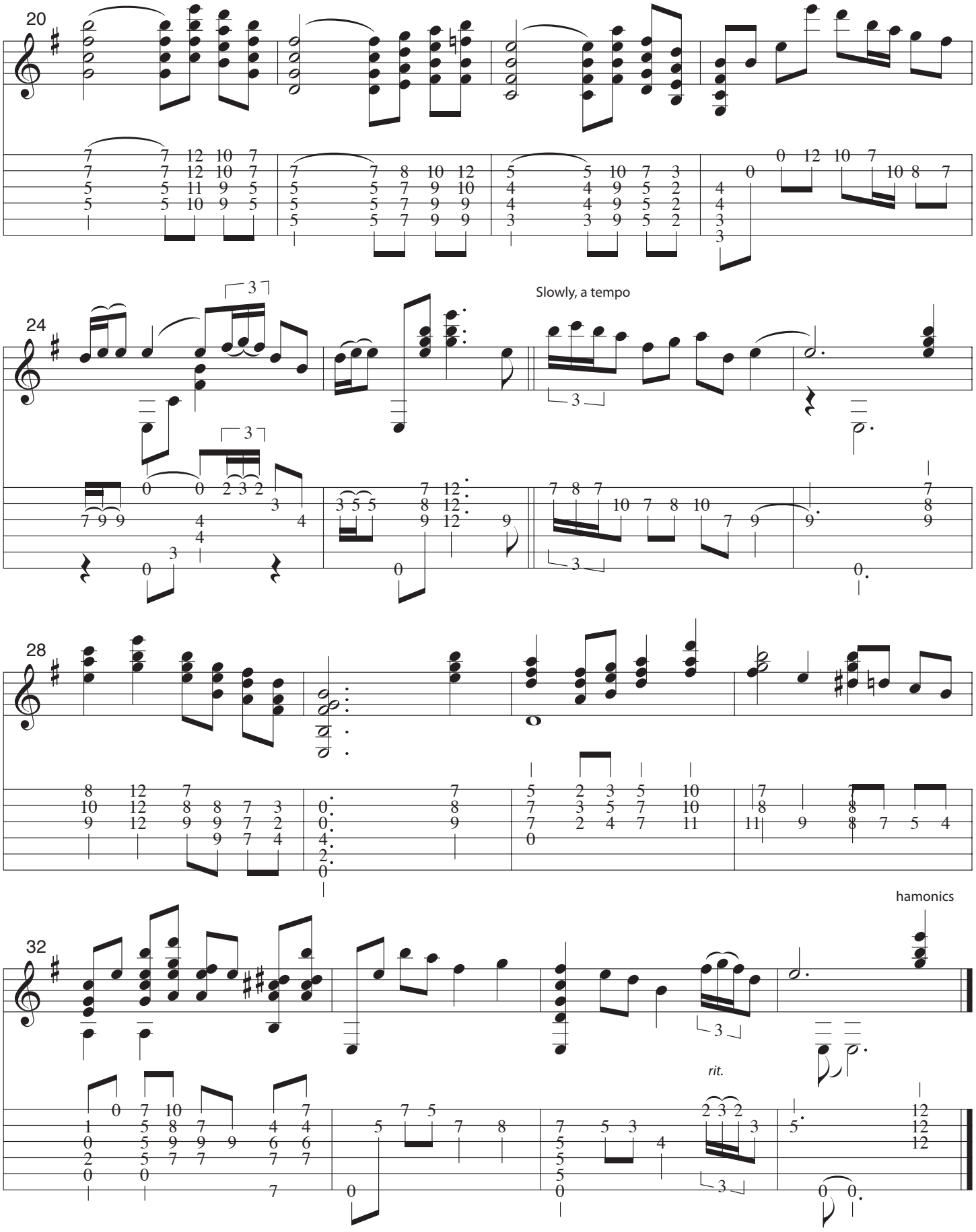
A Place of Rest (con't)

John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Limehouse Blues: Part 3

"Limehouse Blues" is a great swing tune that I first heard adapted to a string band setting on a live recording of the David Grisman Quintet, late 70s, with Andy Statman sitting in on mandolin. This tune from the 30s is often found in jazz fake books in Ab, but Django recorded it in G, and it's the flatpicker's favorite key, good enough for me! This tune is becoming a common crossover tune for bluegrass guitarists interested in swing music.

Like many of you, I was a bluegrass player before I started playing jazz. I found it difficult to not "sound like a bluegrass player," in the way that someone coming from a rock background finds it impossible to instantly sound "like a bluegrass player" (which is something else I went through). Each style of music has its own particular approaches, not to mention dress codes. It wasn't until I started learning great solos from jazz musicians, from guitarists to horn and piano players, that I could really assimilate the vocabulary of the style(s). I use the (s) because of the usual label dilemma—"bluegrass guitar" could mean Jimmy Martin or Bryan Sutton; yet each plays very differently. "Jazz soloing," when not used as an insult by the unenlightened ("oh, that's where nobody knows the melody and everyone does whatever they want"), can mean Louis Armstrong or Keith Jarrett-—two very different styles of playing, with much in common as well.

Although I believe jazz and bluegrass have much more in common than they do differences, there are a few characteristics to jazz phrasing that will help your lines sound more idiomatic:

1). Rhythmic phrasing tends toward use of rests and combinations of rhythms: long notes, short notes, and notes played on the offbeats. Bluegrass flatpicking is often a stream of unbroken eighth notes, for better or worse. It's not a bad idea to leave some daylight in between the phrasing in an improvisation, to allow both the listener and the player to take in a musical event, and respond to it.

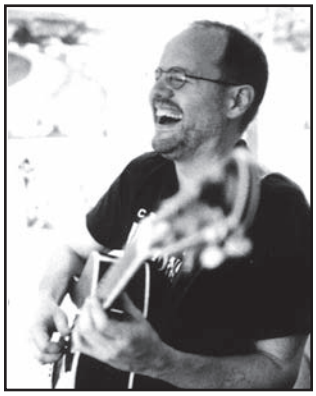
2) The jazz melodic line often uses "chromatic approach notes." These are notes from outside of the usual (diatonic) scales and modes used in flatpicking, either one fret below or above the "target note" which is usually a chord tone (melody note that is also a part of the chord of the moment) .

3) Rather than picking every note (which is analogous to a sax player tonguing every note or a fiddler bowing every note, resulting in a choppy kind of phrasing), jazz players mix articulations, so that some notes are softer than others, a bit more like speaking. The use of slurs (hammer-ons/pull-offs) will help keep your playing from sounding like typing.

Getting to know your chord tones and where they lie on the fretboard will give you a hotline to developing stronger melodies, whether in jazz or bluegrass or any style of music that uses chords (sorry, players on Indian or other non-Western styles, but you all have a lot of other good stuff to worry about...).

This issue's transcription shows the first half of the solo, which is played "down the neck" in the flatpicker's comfort zone. Many mainstream jazz players avoid 1st position, somehow associating it with "country music" (see, snobbery cuts both ways!). I say: I've paid for all the frets, I may as well use 'em! I am also partial to the sound of the low strings, and it is an area of the fingerboard where most of us are most comfortable. Besides, I've seen footage of the legendary jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery playing down there, so it's good enough for me!

I welcome any questions any of you may have that I can address in future columns.



John McGann (www.johnmcgann.com) is a professor at Berklee College of Music, and among other duties leads a Bluegrass Guitar Lab, Django Guitar Lab, Gypsy Jazz Ensemble, and Celtic Music Ensemble. John is a founding member of many groups including The Wayfaring Strangers, The Boston Edge, and Celtic Fiddle Festival. His instructional DVDs Rhythm Tune Up and Rhythm Mandolin and his books Sound Fundamentals and Developing Melodic Variations on Fiddle Tunes are receiving great accolades. Grove Lane, his duo CD with Irish accordion master Joe Derrane has just been released on Compass Records. You can check out his custom transcription service, in which you can have any music of your choice notated, at the above web address. Drop by the web site for lots of great free technique tips for flatpickers.

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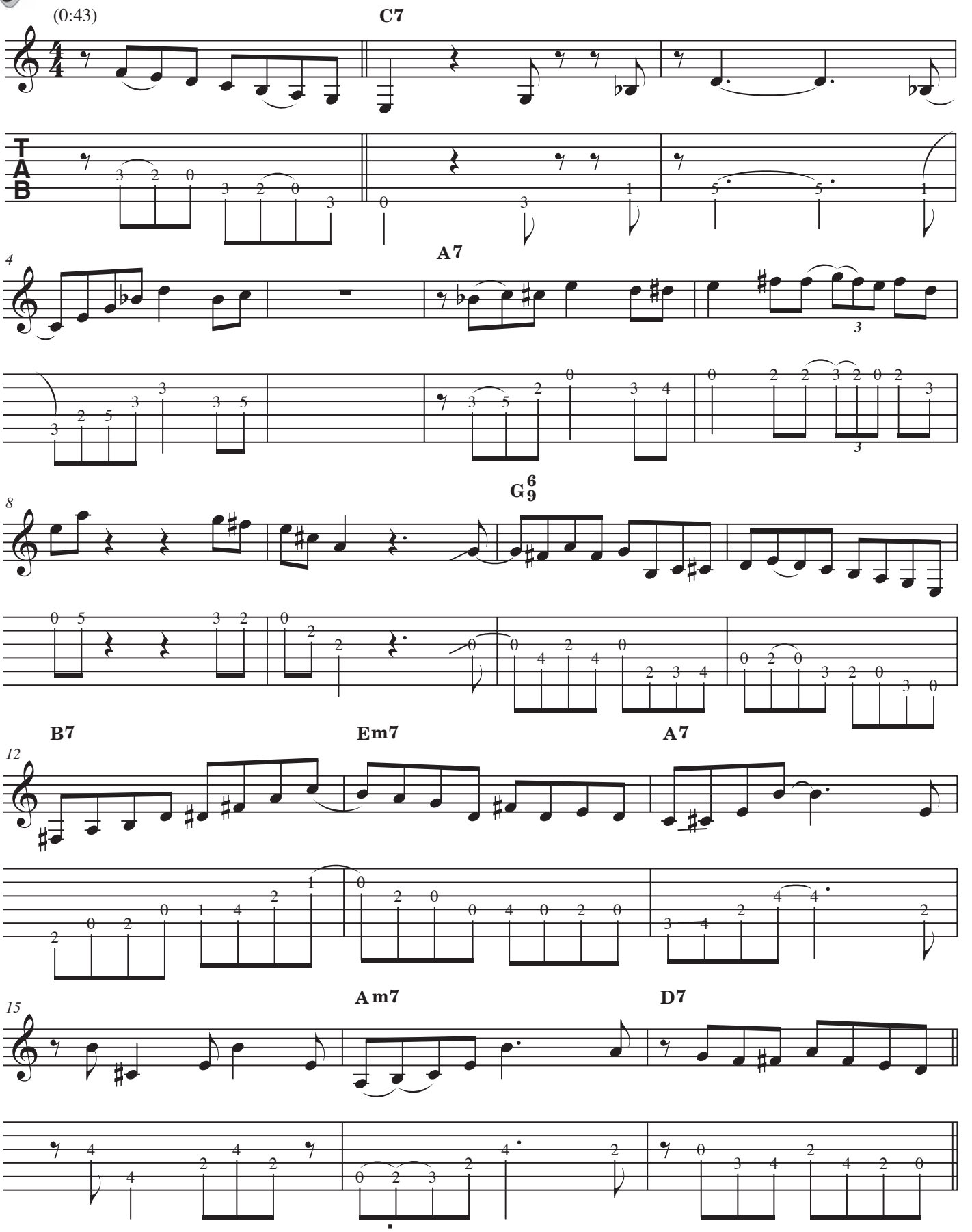
Limehouse Blues

Arranged by John McGann

CD Highlight
Dale Martin: *Cold Lonely Night*

by Dan Miller

Sometimes I worry about the future of flatpicking. Men in the 45-to-65 age ranges dominate the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* demographic. Whenever Tim May and I go out to teach workshops around the country, we see that same prevalent demographic. In fact, last spring Tim and I walked into the workshop room to teach a class in Chico, California, and one of the attendees said, "You must be the instructors because you are young people." Having just turned 50 and carrying my newly acquired AARP card in my wallet, I felt good that I was being referred to as a "young person," but it didn't make me feel optimistic about the future of flatpicking when a 50-year-old is considered a "young" flatpicker.

Even though our flatpicking ranks are heavy on the side of those reaching retirement age, all is not lost because there are some great young pickers out there. I was reminded of just how talented and enthusiastic young flatpickers can be when Tim May and I taught a workshop in October of 2011 at Morgan Music in Lebanon, Missouri. Our workshop was part of Morgan's grand re-opening celebration. The old store burnt down several years ago and the events Tim and I attended were at their brand new, and very awesome, location. Tim and I taught a workshop in the afternoon and then Bob Minner, Bull Harman, and Dale Martin performed a flatpicking concert that evening. Morgan Music and Bourgeois Guitars sponsored the free concert.

I am friends with Bull Harman and Bob Minner and both Bull and Bob have been featured in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. However, I had not heard of Dale Martin. Just before the show I was introduced to Dale and I was pleased to see that he was a fairly young flatpicker. I thought, "OK, this is going to be interesting to see if this 23-year-old can hang in there with two veteran pickers who have been flatpicking more than a decade longer than he has been alive." As I sat through the concert I was pleasantly surprised that Dale was able to hang right in there with the veterans. His picking was strong, clean, and creative and he demonstrated a great deal of confidence on stage even though the situation could

have certainly intimidated him. He seemed relaxed and comfortable and he played great.

After interviewing Dale I found out why he is confident on stage behind his guitar. Dale has spent the majority of the past decade on stage with his family's bluegrass band, The Martins. Most 23-year-old musicians are just starting to think about recording an album with their band. Dale has already recorded eight CDs and has been performing since he was about 12. Despite his relatively young age, he is not a newcomer to performing or recording.

Dale Martin is the second of the six Martin children. Currently the family lives in Jefferson City, Missouri, and everyone but Mom is a member of the band. The band's core consists of Dale's father, Elvin, on bass, his older sister Jeana (24) playing fiddle, Dale (23) on guitar and mandolin, and younger sisters Janice (22) and Larita (20) on banjo and Dobro, respectively. Youngest brother Lee (14) is currently learning how to play the guitar and fills in the guitar spot when Dale plays mandolin. Youngest sister Anne (11) comes up on stage and clog dances during the show. She is also learning how to play the fiddle. Both Lee and Anne are currently part of the Martin's stage show.

The Martin family band was born back in about 1999 when Jeana started to learn how to play the fiddle and Dale's father bought him a guitar at a pawn shop so that he could back up Jeana's fiddle playing. Dale said, "When we were younger we lived out in the sticks in Versailles, Missouri. We were home schooled and didn't leave the house much since we were in the middle of nowhere. Being able to play music and practice our instruments was a reward for finishing our school work early each day."

Although Dale's father, Elvin, had been a long-time bluegrass music fan, he had not tried to pick up an instrument until 1997. Dale said, "In 1997, as a result of a personal goal, Dad was able to buy a mandolin." In 1998 Elvin saw another family band play at a bluegrass festival and thought, "that would be fun to do!" About the same time he had purchased his mandolin he had also bought a fiddle and so in 1999 Jeana started learning how to play the fiddle and Dale the guitar. In 2000 Janice got her banjo. Dale said, "She picked it up fast!" In November of that year the band recorded their first CD! By 2001 Larita started learning how to play the Dobro.

Dale's learning process began by simply studying fiddle tune chord progressions and playing rhythm for his sister. It wasn't long before they were performing in church with their dad on mandolin. The first lead break Dale learned was an arrangement of "Wildwood Flower" that he learned from a book. Dale said, "I didn't have the timing quite right and so Jerry Shadrick (see *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*, Vol 9, No 6), offered to show me what he knew. I had about eight to ten lessons with Jerry to start learning how to flatpick." In addition to the lessons with Jerry, Dale also worked with instructional material by Bert Casey. Since then Dale has learned the majority of what he knows by ear. He said, "I usually learn the melody first and then I try to fit licks in around it."

The first three CDs that the Martins recorded (in 2000, 2001, and 2002) were gospel CDs. In 2003 they recorded their first bluegrass CD. In addition to recording a new CD almost every year the family was also practicing a lot around the house and performing at various venues, events, and festivals. Regarding the early recordings, Dale said, "When we first started recording we played everything live. We just went into the studio and played what we knew how to play. We learned a lot." A second bluegrass CD, *Blue Side of Lonesome*, was released

in 2005. This one was recorded at a friend's home studio using Pro Tools. During the recording of that CD Dale started getting very interested in the recording process. By the time the band recorded their sixth CD, *In Transition*, in 2006, they were recording at their own home studio with Dale and his brother-in-law, Eddie Faris, engineering the project.

In 2008 the band was ready to record their seventh CD, *Cold Lonely Night*. By that time they were all veterans of the process and coming into full stride. They weren't teenagers anymore; the kids were now young adults. They had the studio experience of recoding six CDs. They had already recorded and engineered one of those CDs at home. They had been practicing and performing together for nearly ten years and their performance schedule had grown to the point where they were performing about seventy dates a year. This was really their first CD as a seasoned adult band. They were ready to show the bluegrass world what they could do now that they were all grown up, and they certainly did it! This is a very fine contemporary bluegrass CD.

The song selection provides a very nice mix of vocals (10 songs) and instrumentals (2 tunes). Of the ten vocal songs eight are contemporary songs, mostly written by Dale (1 song) or friends of the band (Mike Collins, Lowell Appling, and Jerry Dill). These new songs are all very well-written. One of the instrumental tunes is traditional ("Tom & Jerry") and the other is more contemporary (Terry Baucom's "Knee Deep in Bluegrass"). The other two vocal tunes are Johnny Cash numbers, "Papa Played the Dobro" and "Train of Love."

Every one of the Martin soloists plays with strength and confidence. Their lead lines are interesting, yet tasteful, and fit the feeling of the song. As one might imagine with a family band, the vocal harmonies are very tight. Dale sings a couple of the songs, but with three out of the five band member being female, the female voice predominates. The sister harmonies are wonderful. All but one of the songs are played at an upbeat tempo. Overall this is a very enjoyable contemporary bluegrass CD. I get a lot of CDs in the mail and this was one of my favorites in 2010.

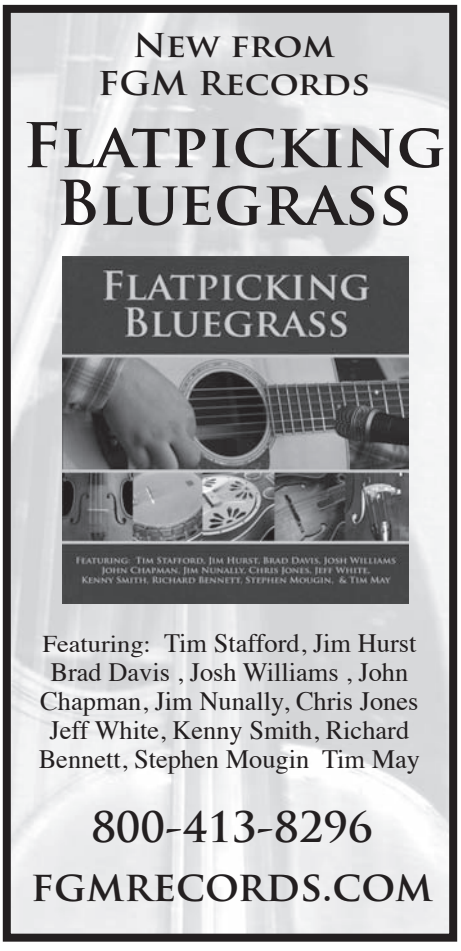
The arrangements on these tunes are truly band arrangements, meaning no one instrument is highlighted more than the others. Dale does not take lead solos on every song and on some songs he splits a break with one of the other instruments. So, this is by no means a bluegrass guitar CD. It is a bluegrass band CD and Dale does a great job here in his role as a band player. His rhythm is strong, his fill licks are powerful and well placed, and his solos are tasteful. You couldn't ask for more out of a band player. Hopefully one day soon he will also release a solo CD (that is a hint Dale!).

Dale Martin

On this issue's audio CD we are featuring the one instrumental tune where Dale gets to step out and take a full solo. It is Terry Baucom's "Knee Deep in Bluegrass." You can hear the cut on this issue's audio CD and you will find a transcription of Dale's solo on the pages that follow this article. On this recording Dale is playing the Bourgeois Country Boy guitar that he has owned since 2003. If you like what you hear on our audio CD and want to check out The Martin's recordings, please visit their website (http://www.bluegrassmartins.com)

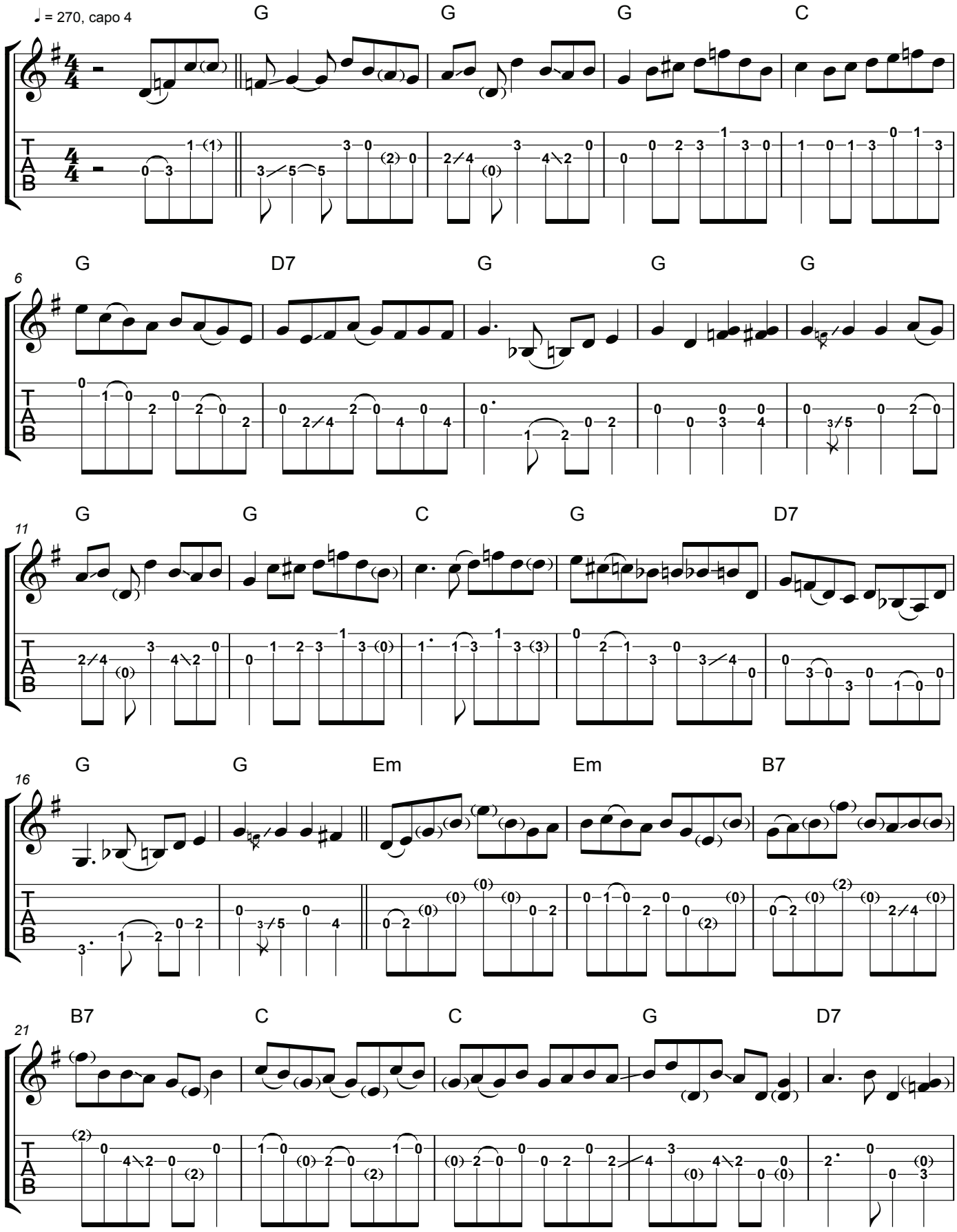
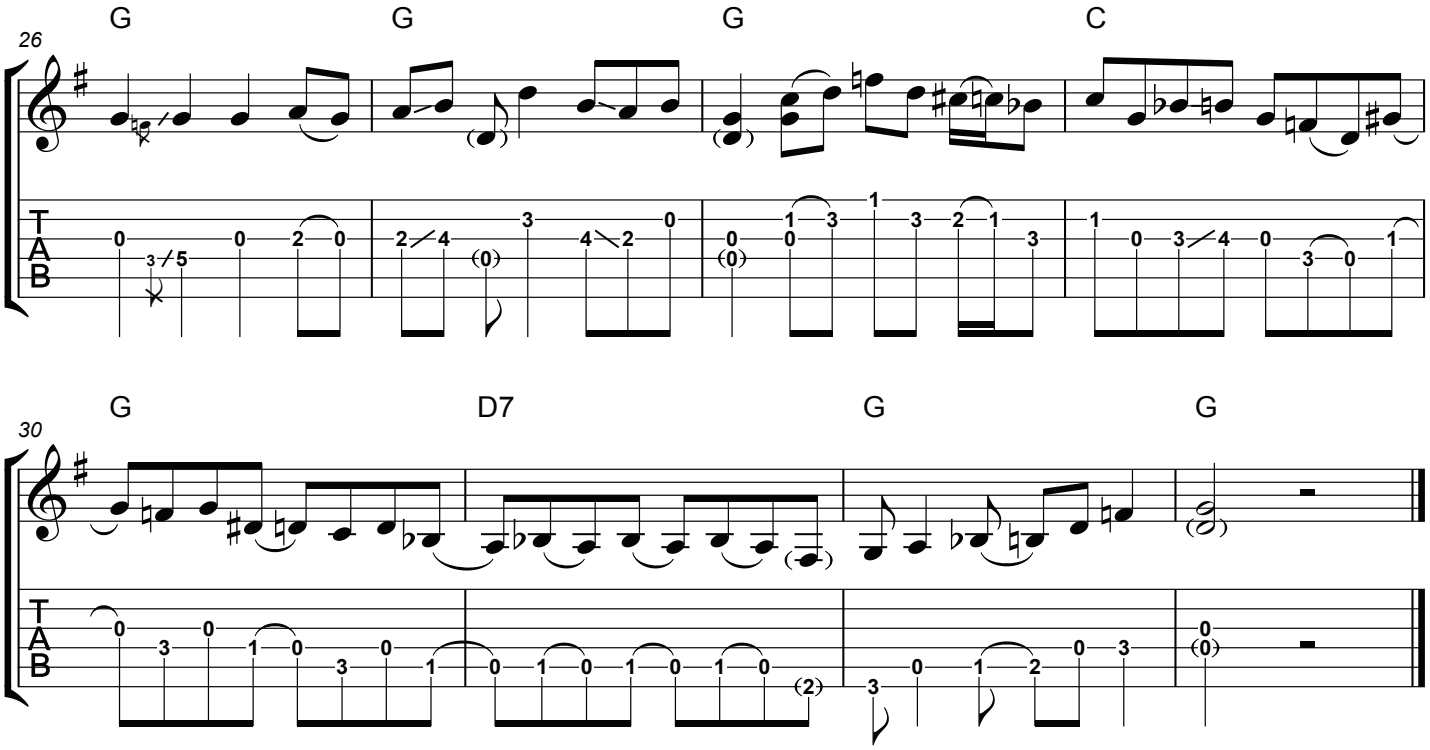
To date the Martins have performed in 31 states, including those as far spread as California, Texas, Maine, and Florida. They have also performed in the Bahamas. In 2009 they recorded another new CD. This one was a Christmas album featuring a bunch of holiday favorites. The band's performance schedule also continues to grow, with no sign of slowing down.

Although sometimes it appears that the average bluegrass crowd is getting older, bands like The Martins are here to prove that there are still younger folks that are out there performing this music with enthusiasm and brilliance. If you get the chance, you need to check them out!



Audio CD
Track 36

Knee Deep in Bluegrass

Written by Terry Baucom
Arranged by Dale Martin

Knee Deep in Bluegrass (con't)

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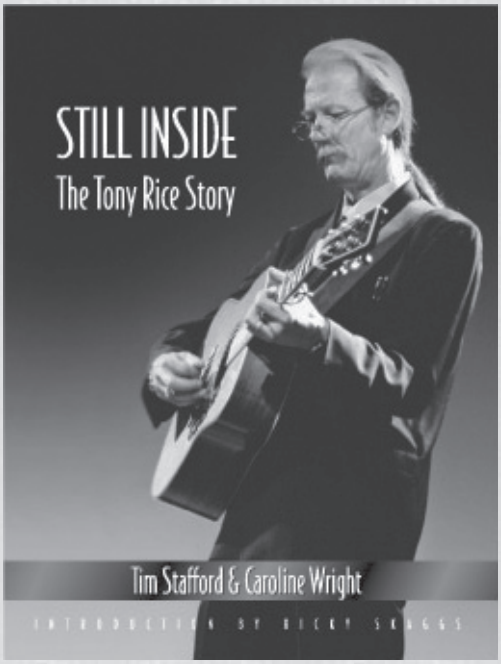

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In the book's final chapter, co-author Tim Stafford—a highly respected acoustic guitarist in his own right—provides insight into Tony's technique, timing, right hand, choice of picks, and much more. Tim also discusses Tony's prize possession, the 1935 Martin D-28 Herringbone guitar formerly owned by the great Clarence White.

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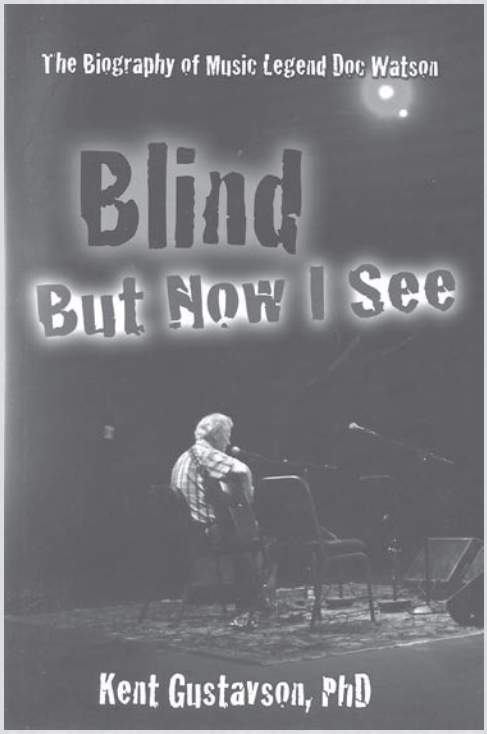

Blind But Now I See:
The Biography of Music Legend Doc Watson
by Kent Gustavson

From the day he stepped off the bus in New York City, North Carolina music legend Doc Watson changed the music world forever. His influence has been recognized by presidents and by the heroes of modern music, from country stars to rock and roll idols. This is a biography of a flatpicking legend.

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Reviews

Carpenter & May
Fred Carpenter and Tim May
Violin Shop Records VSR-003

Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

Grab. If I get only one word to describe this CD, "grab" is it. I was familiar with Tim May from his last CD, *Find My Way Back*. But I recently had the good fortune to attend one of the Tim May/Dan Miller guitar workshops, and was able to listen to Tim play live: a world of difference! I don't know whether I was not really listening before, but Tim pulls this dynamic rich tone out of a guitar that simply rivets—grabs—your attention.

So enter *Carpenter & May*, which is really a trio album (Charlie Chadwick takes bass responsibilities to Carpenter's fiddle and May's guitar) that successfully stretches across a wide spectrum of acoustic music without running any risk of being easily categorized.

National Public Radio talks about its "driveway moments," where you are so engrossed with the story that you sit in your car in your driveway until the story finishes. *Carpenter & May* had, for me, the same effect: I found myself compelled to sit in the parking lot at work until several of the tunes finished. The musicianship is that compelling.

The CD opens with the Lennon/McCartney classic "We Can Work It Out," introduced with a guitar riff that reconfigures the iconic tune into something uniquely acoustic. "Cherokee Shuffle," the next tune up, plays fiddle against guitar in a music conversation. For me, this tune highlights the essence of Tim's style: both accessible (in the sense of "hey, I can probably play that arrangement with enough practice") and sublimely artistic (characterized by a musical interchange between fiddle and guitar at the end of the tune that resolves into some really tasty note-for-note unison work). By that time I was wishing I had brought my guitar to work so I could try to work out some of the licks.

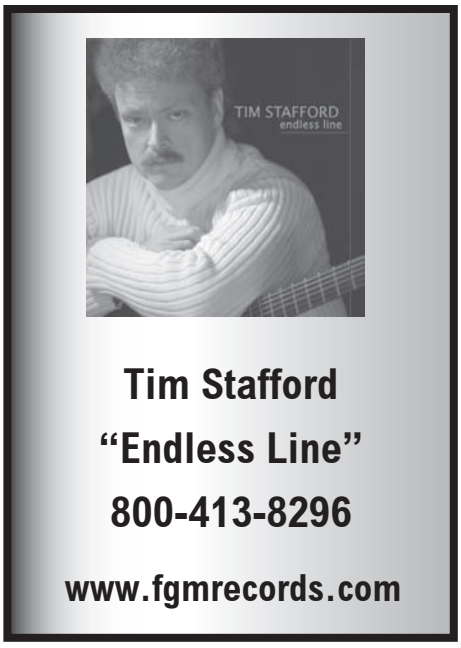
But it's not all fiddle tunes. We've got Gershwin ("Lady Be Good"), some Hank Williams ("Blue and Lonesome"), a bit of Celtic/soft rock ("Isle of Inishmore/Dance with Me") and the 30s classic "Miss the Mississippi (and You)." There's variety enough to satisfy most casual listeners, and certainly enough licks to keep any guitarist (or fiddler) busy for several months.

Added to that is a superb job of recording: crisp, clear, and very immediate, making the project feel as though you've been fortunate enough to be invited to a personal concert with Tim and Fred. An additional benefit is the CD packaging: cardboard without a hint of plastic. All this fine music and ecological responsibility as well!

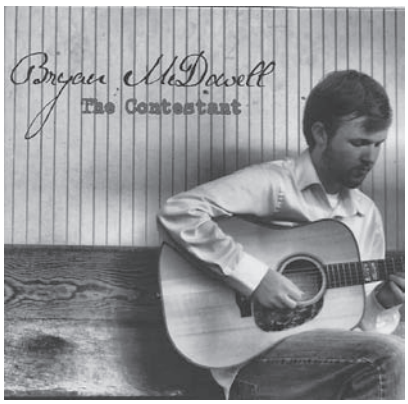
And apparently I'm not alone in my appreciation of this album. In November of 2010 (one month after its release), the September Folk Radio charts positioned Carpenter & May as the #1 album, the #1 artists, and included seven songs in the top 40 (including "We Can Work It Out" as the #3 single).

Which gets us back to the one word: grab. Do your musical soul a favor and grab yourself a copy of this CD.

Tune List: We Can Work It Out; Cherokee Shuffle; Isle of Inishmore/Dance with Me; If You're Ever in Oklahoma; Lady Be Good; What a Wonderful World; Whiskey Before Breakfast; First Day in Town; Miss the Mississippi; Soldiers Joy/Fishers Hornpipe; Leaving JP



The Contestant
Bryan McDowell



Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

It's not every year someone takes both a triple first at Winfield (mandolin, fiddle, and flatpick guitar) and then repeats the feat as the Georgia State mandolin, fiddle, and flatpick guitar champion. But that was in 2009. In 2010, Bryan McDowell took fiddle, flatpick guitar, and banjo championship at Rocky Grass, as well as several other titles. What does the 2011 competition hold for Mr. McDowell? Perhaps it's a little too scary to contemplate, at least for the rest of us. We'll just have to sit back and watch.

In a very real way, *The Contestant* is a Polariod™ of an emerging artist at a point in time, a baseline early in a career that we can return to in a few years and see how a remarkable talent has developed. The CD provides eight arrangements of Bryan's competition tunes for fiddle, guitar, and mandolin. Not only (as you might expect) does Bryan play all the instruments, but he also produced the CD. And the mix clearly demonstrates Bryan's attention to both the sound of the instrument by itself as well as its place in an ensemble.

If you've not been able to hear Bryan in competition, you really should take the opportunity to listen to one of the finest young multi-instrumentalists in the competition circuit today.

Tune List: Whiskey Before Breakfast; Clarinet Polka; Little Rock Getaway; Angel's Wells; Swing 42; Sweet Georgia Brown; Over the Waterfall; Salt Creek.

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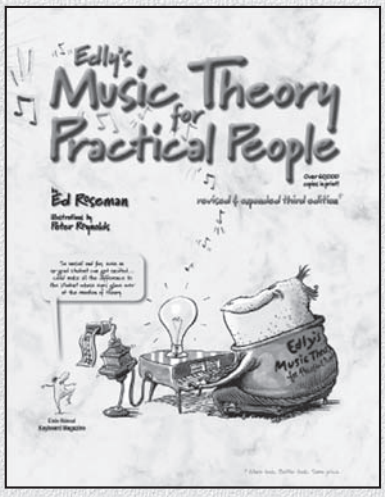

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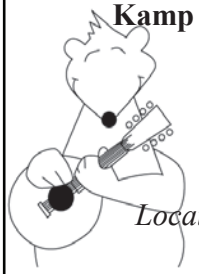

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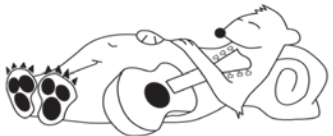

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New CDs at Flatpicking Mercantile

Maro Kawabata:
Sunset Drive

This CD from Maro Kawabata features the guitar playing of both Maro and Wyatt Rice. Wyatt also engineered and co-produced the project and Maro brought in a great line up of bluegrass pickers and singers to help him out, including Rickie Simpkins, Sammy Shelor, Adam Steffey, Ronnie Rice, Don Rigsby, Andy Hall, Patty Mitchell, and Richard Bennett.

Bryan McDowell:
The Contestant

Bryan McDowell is perhaps the most successful all-around contest player of all-time. During the past two years he has won an unprecedented number of contests on a variety of instruments. Anyone who has not heard Bryan play and is curious about this young talent, should check out Bryan's new CD.

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Guitar Review: Paul Reed Smith Modern Acoustic Guitars with an Old Soul

Reviewed by Avril Smith

Over the past 30 years, Paul Reed Smith has built a reputation as one of the top electric guitar builders of our time, with a long line of instruments valued for their beautiful woods, impressive finish work and most of all, guitar-hero-inspiring tone.

It is only very recently that Paul has begun building acoustic guitars after finding inspiration in an instrument made more than 150 years ago by the father of the acoustic guitar, Antonio Torres.

Describing the Torres guitar as "the best sounding musical instrument I have ever heard," Paul and his senior luthier, Steve Fischer, set out to understand how a very small maple and spruce guitar could produce such remarkable volume, balance and bass response.

The results of that journey to explore Torres' genius are two PRS acoustic guitar models – the Angelus and the slightly larger Tonare Grand. Available with mahogany or cocobolo back and sides and sitka or red spruce tops, the PRS acoustic guitars are impressive instruments with deep bass, rich midrange, bell-like highs and volume to spare.

These guitars are not copies or reproductions visually or tonally. While they do not look like traditional flatpicking guitars, endorsements from players like Ricky Skaggs and Cody Kilby demonstrate how powerful these guitars can be in a flatpicking context.

For single-line playing, PRS acoustic guitars are incredibly responsive instruments that remain clear and articulate when pushed hard or picked with a light touch. As a rhythm instrument, the PRS can provide punchy back-up in a bluegrass stomp or delicate crosspicking accompaniment with good note separation.

The secret to the PRS tone may lie in the bracing pattern. In addition to the traditional X bracing, PRS replaces the tone bars that you normally find behind the bridge with mahogany fan braces inspired by the Torres guitar bracing.

Smith and Fischer also worked closely with players like Ricky Skaggs to fine-tune the acoustic guitars. "To be a great creator and inventor, you have to be a good listener and that's what Paul is," Ricky explained. "Paul got his instruments in the hands of great masters and he listened to what he needed to do to make them better. And then he did it."

Paul and Steve settled on cocobolo as their rosewood of choice, which is a red-ish and often highly figured rosewood. Both the Tonare Grand and the Angelus are available with cocobolo or figured mahogany back and sides. Cocobolo comes standard for the fretboard, bridge and headstock. PRS guitars also feature a bone nut and saddle, 1 11/16" nut width and nitrocellulose finish.

Instead of using a traditional adjustable truss rod, PRS uses aerospace-grade carbon fiber to reinforce the neck. "If the neck is strong and solid," Fischer says, "it will transfer the string's energy into the body and you get a better sound."

The tuners are hand-machined exclusively for PRS by Keith Robson. Players like Tony McManus and Martin Simpson, who use multiple alternate tunings on their PRS acoustic guitars, praise the precision of the Robson tuners.

The bottom line: Paul Reed Smith is building high-end acoustic guitars with a distinct voice and a unique look that stand out, especially in the world of flatpicking. The base-model PRS acoustic guitar lists for $5330.

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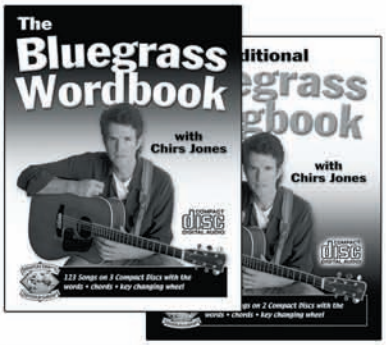

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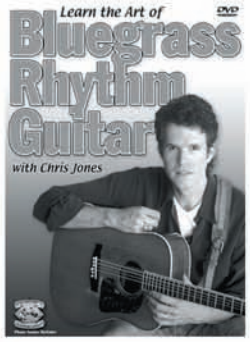

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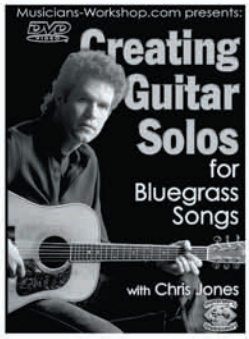

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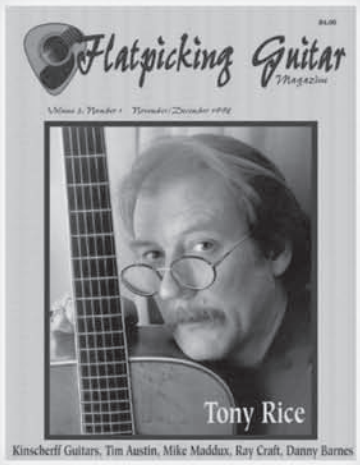

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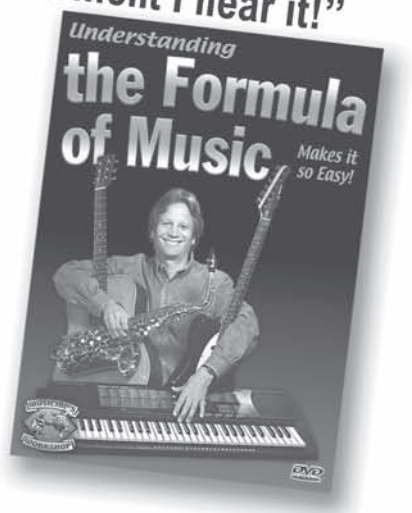

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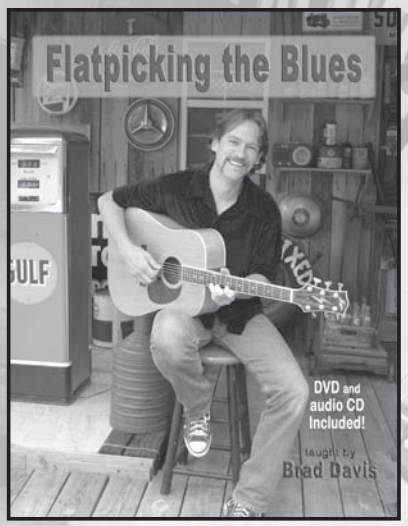

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In addition to teaching you how to play straight blues, Brad also demonstrates and teaches how you might take tunes that you may already know from the standard flatpicking repertoire and spice them up with blues licks. If you are tired of playing flatpicked fiddle tunes and bluegrass songs the same old way you will greatly appreciate Brad's instruction on how you can add excitement and interest to songs that you already play by adding a blues flavor.

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